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THE NEW MUTANTS
ANNUAL
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WILDWAYS
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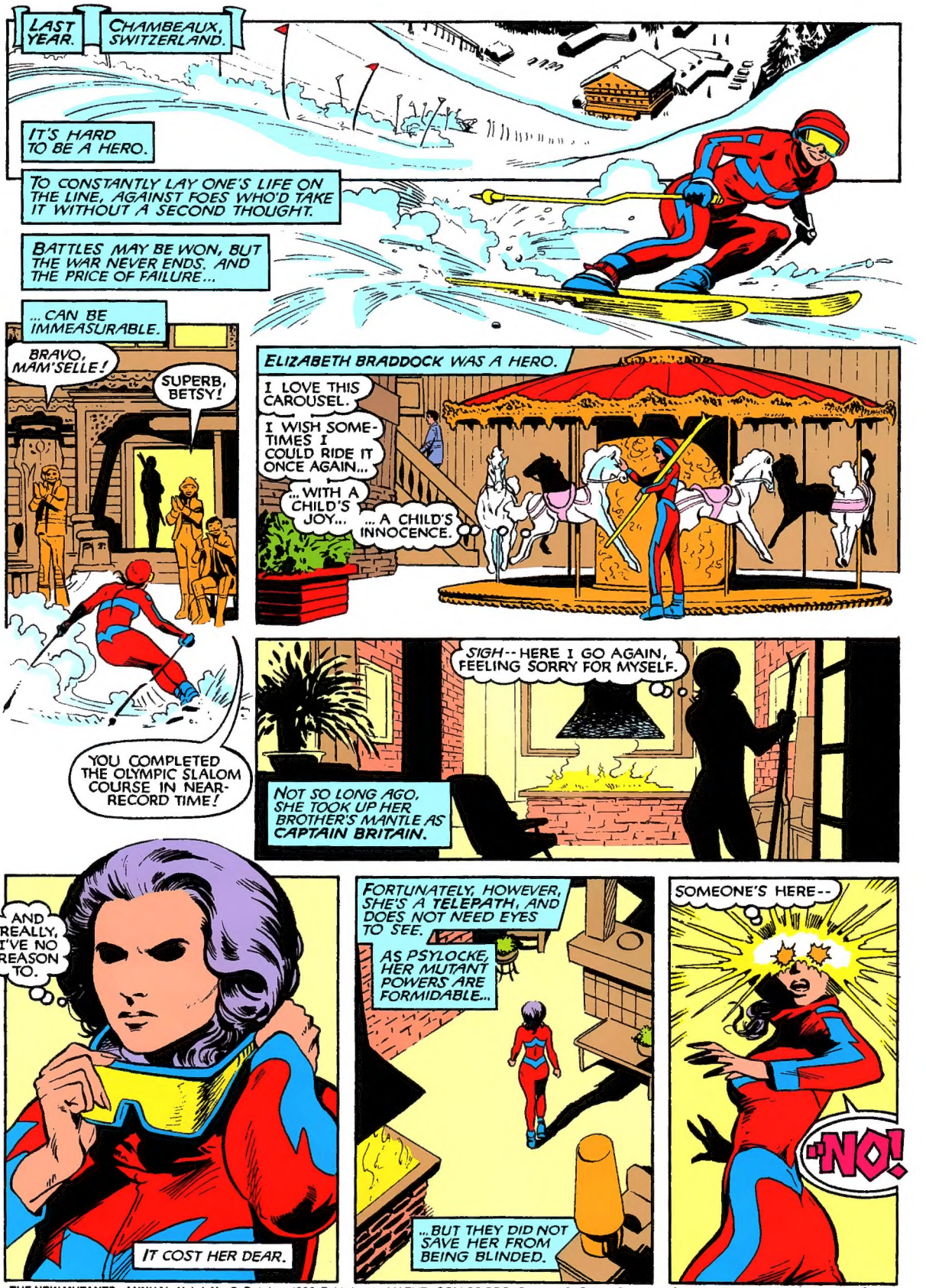
LAST YEAR.
CHAMBEAUX, SWITZERLAND.
IT'S HARD TO BE A HERO.
TO CONSTANTLY LAY ONE'S LIFE ON THE LINE, AGAINST FOES WHO'D TAKE IT WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.
BATTLES MAY BE WON, BUT THE WAR NEVER ENDS. AND THE PRICE OF FAILURE...
...CAN BE IMMEASURABLE.
BRAVO, MAM'SELLE!
SUPERB, BETSY!
YOU COMPLETED THE OLYMPIC SLALOM COURSE IN NEAR-RECORD TIME!
ELIZABETH BRADDOCK WAS A HERO.
I LOVE THIS CAROUSEL.
I WISH SOMETIMES I COULD RIDE IT ONCE AGAIN...
...WITH A CHILD'S JOY...
...A CHILD'S INNOCENCE.
SIGH--HERE I GO AGAIN, FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF.
NOT SO LONG AGO, SHE TOOK UP HER BROTHER'S MANTLE AS CAPTAIN BRITAIN.
AND REALLY, I'VE NO REASON TO.
IT COST HER DEAR.
FORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, SHE'S A TELEPATH, AND DOES NOT NEED EYES TO SEE.
AS PSYLOCKE, HER MUTANT POWERS ARE FORMIDABLE...
...BUT THEY DID NOT SAVE HER FROM BEING BLINDED.
SOMEONE'S HERE--
-NO!

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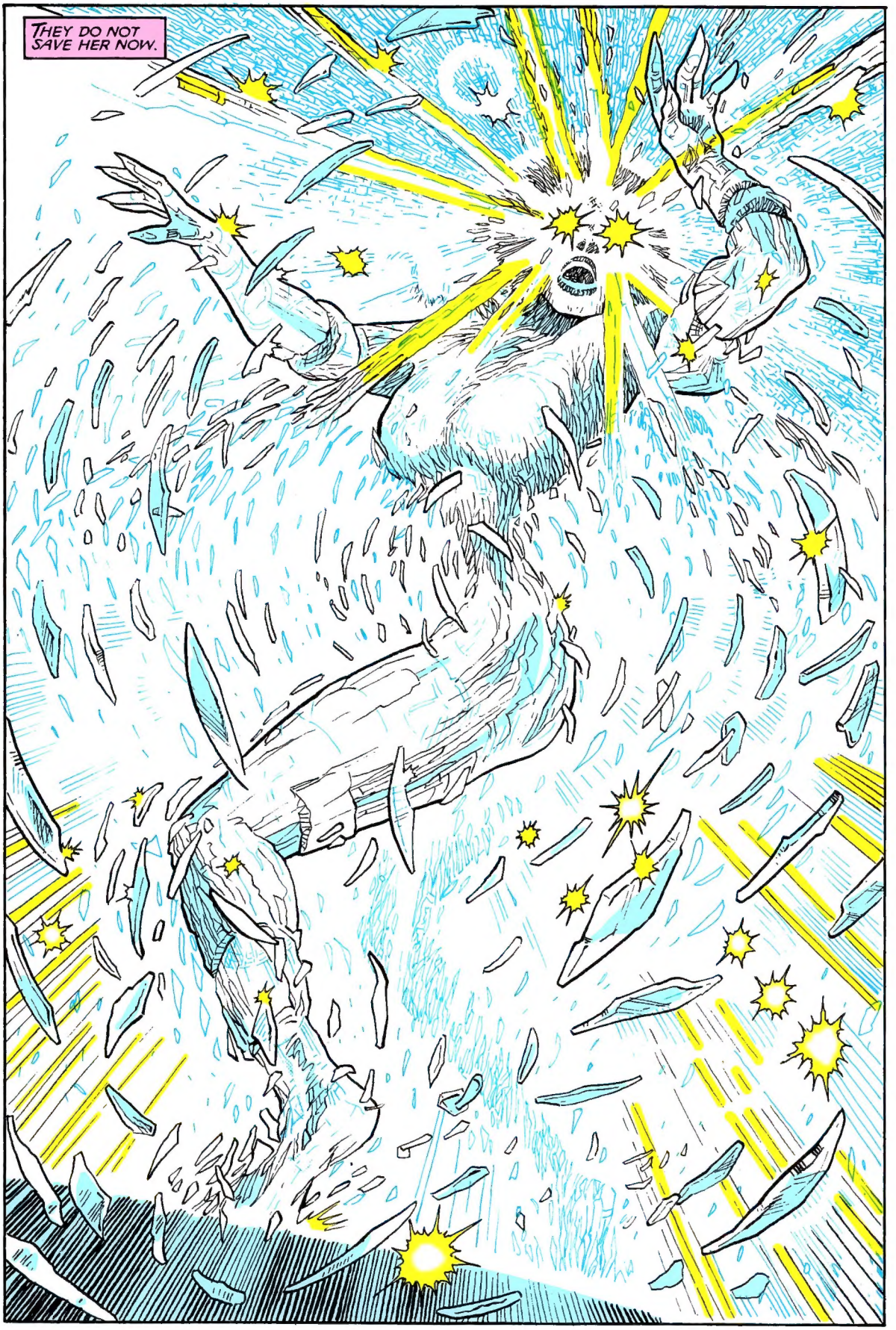
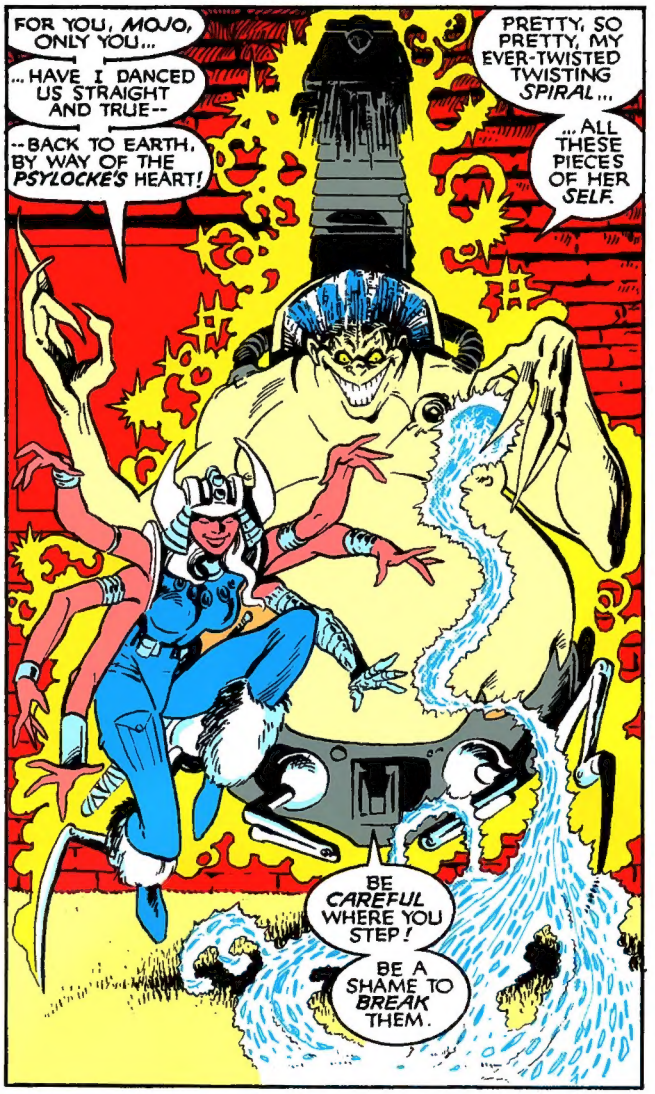
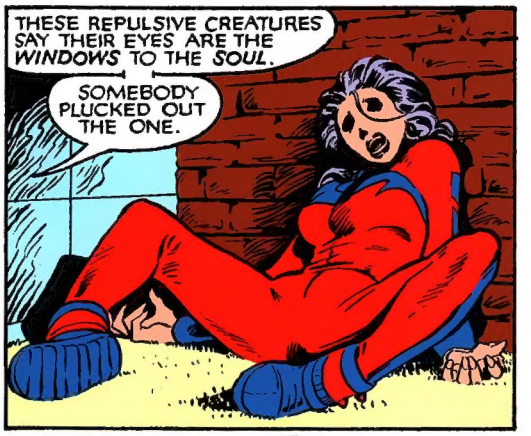
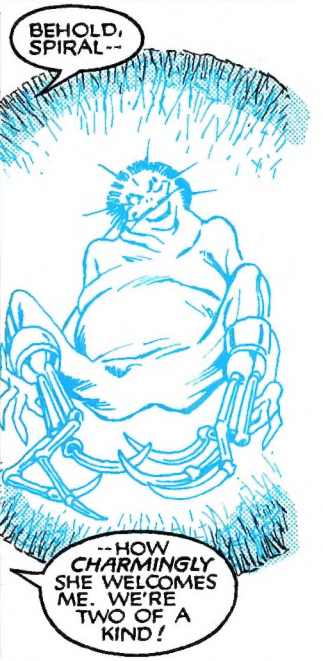
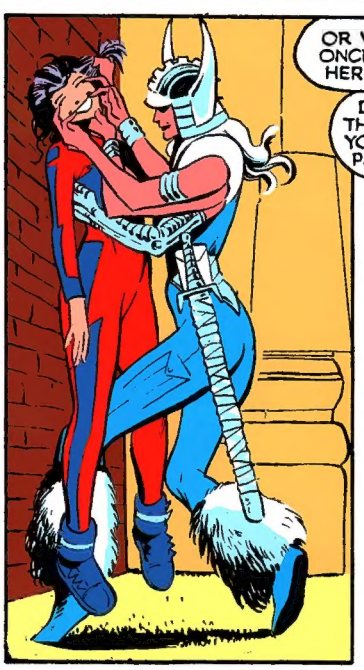

THEY DO NOT SAVE HER NOW.


FOR YOU, MOJO, ONLY YOU...
... HAVE I DANCED US STRAIGHT AND TRUE--
--BACK TO EARTH, BY WAY OF THE PSYLOCKE'S HEART!
PRETTY, SO PRETTY, MY EVER-TWISTING SPIRAL...
... ALL THESE PIECES OF HER SELF.
BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU STEP!
BE A SHAME TO BREAK THEM.


THESE REPULSIVE CREATURES SAY THEIR EYES ARE THE WINDOWS TO THE SOUL.
SOMEBODY PLUCKED OUT THE ONE.

NOW, MOJO HAS THE OTHER!

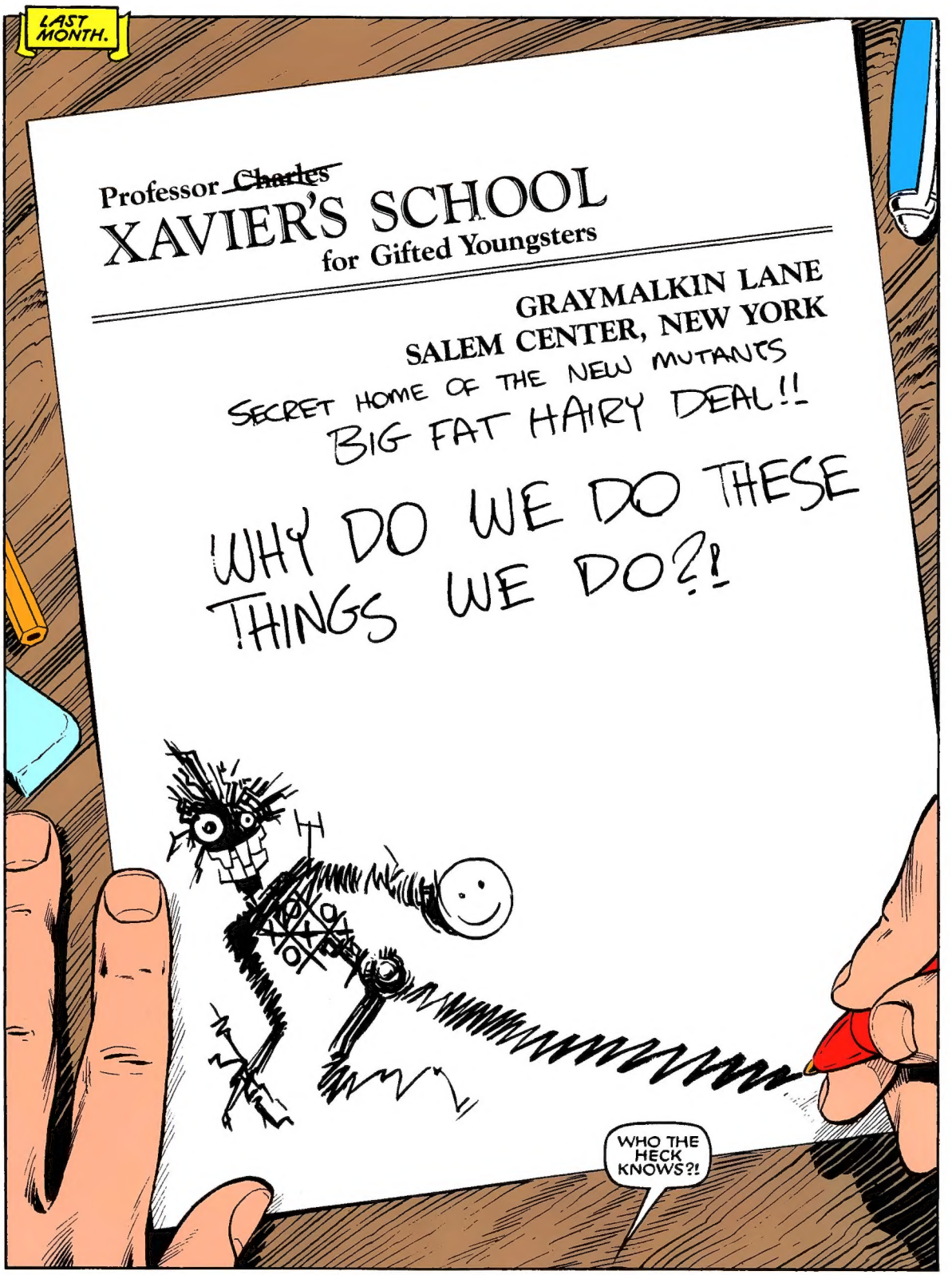

BEHOLD, SPIRAL--
--HOW CHARMINGLY SHE WELCOMES ME. WE'RE TWO OF A KIND!

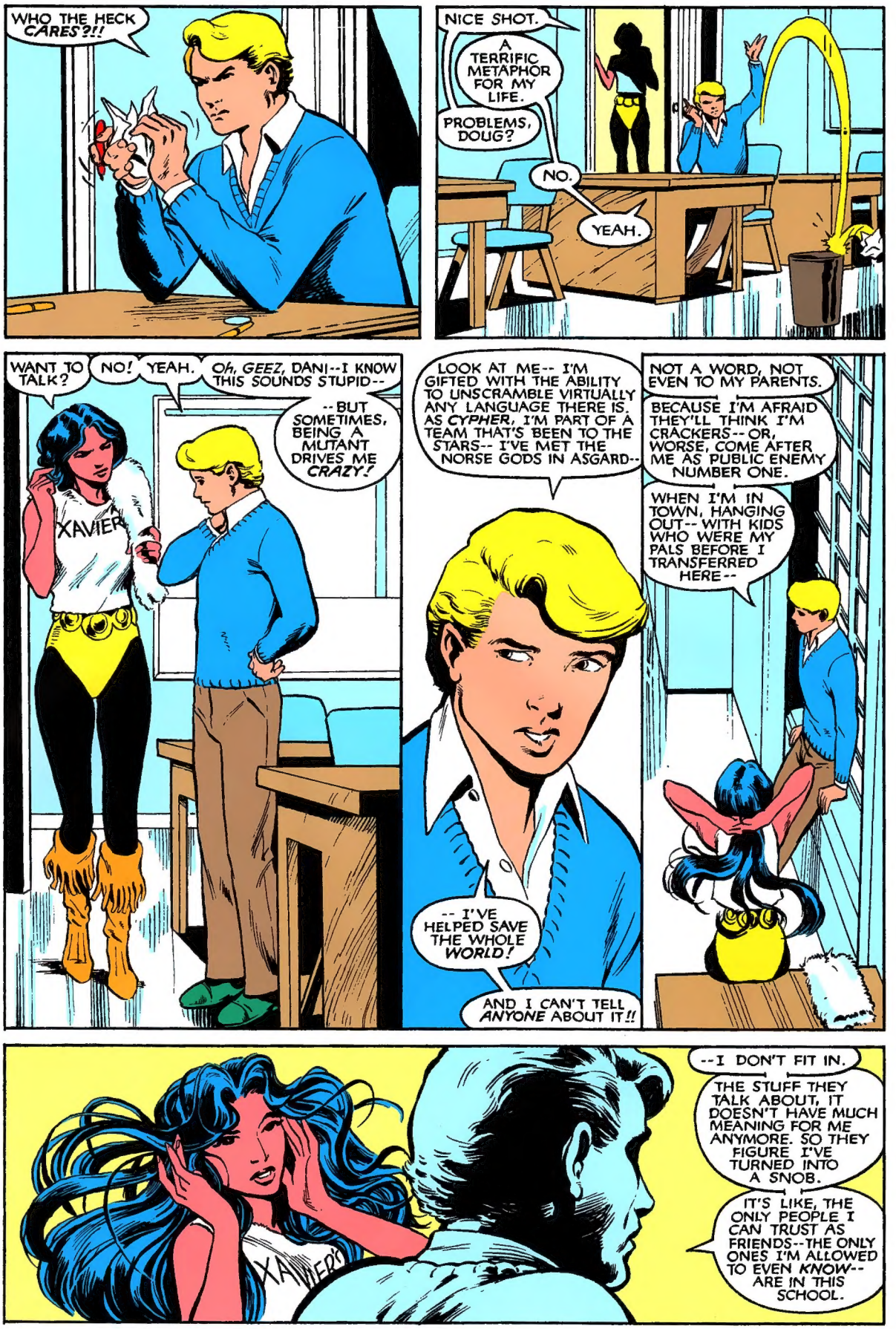

OR WILL BE, ONCE I RIP HER SPINE.
DOESN'T THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY, PSYLOCKE?

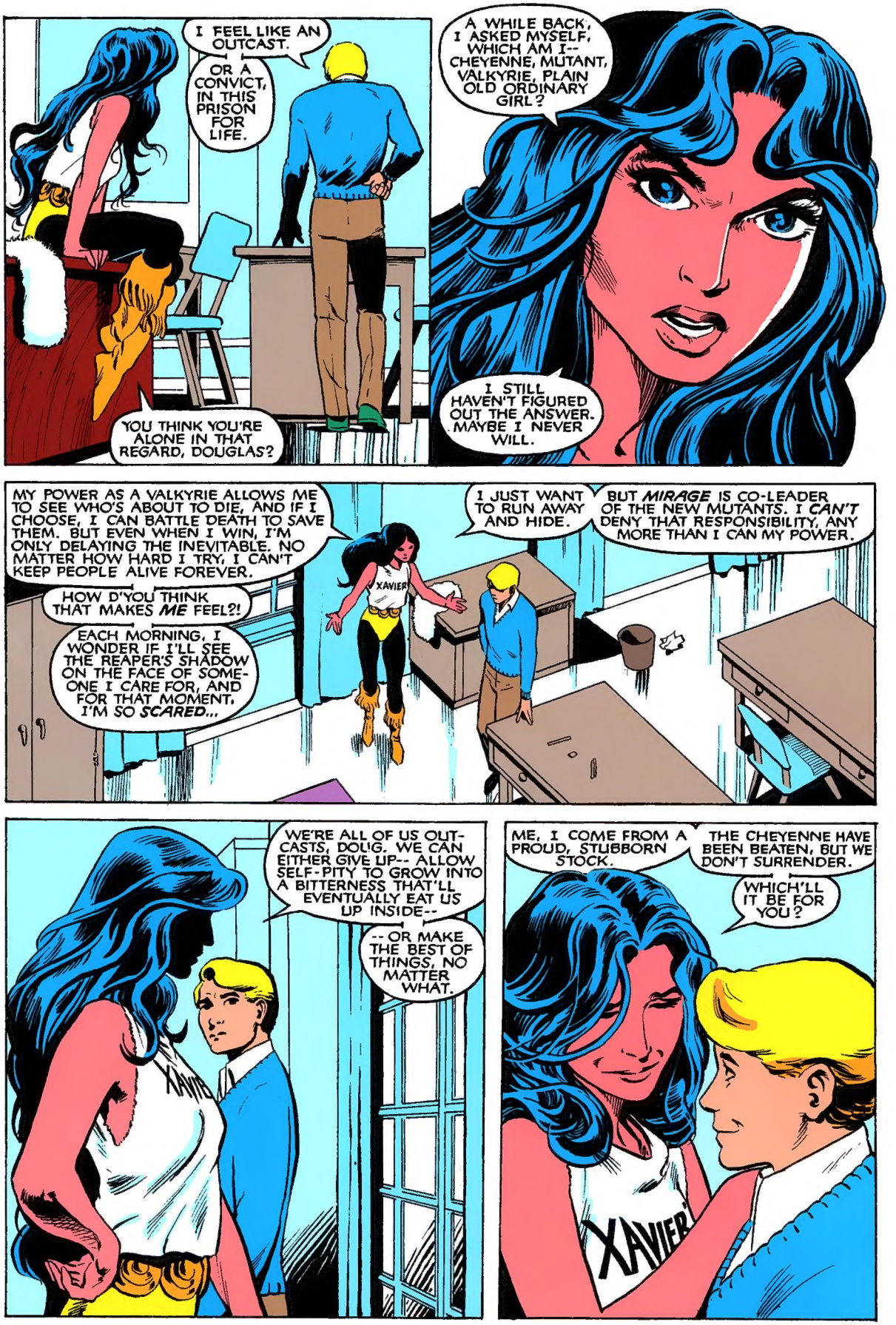
OF COURSE, IT DOES!
OPEN YOUR EYES, SCREWLOOSE. THE TOY'S BROKEN.
I KNOW THAT!
THAT'S THE POINT!

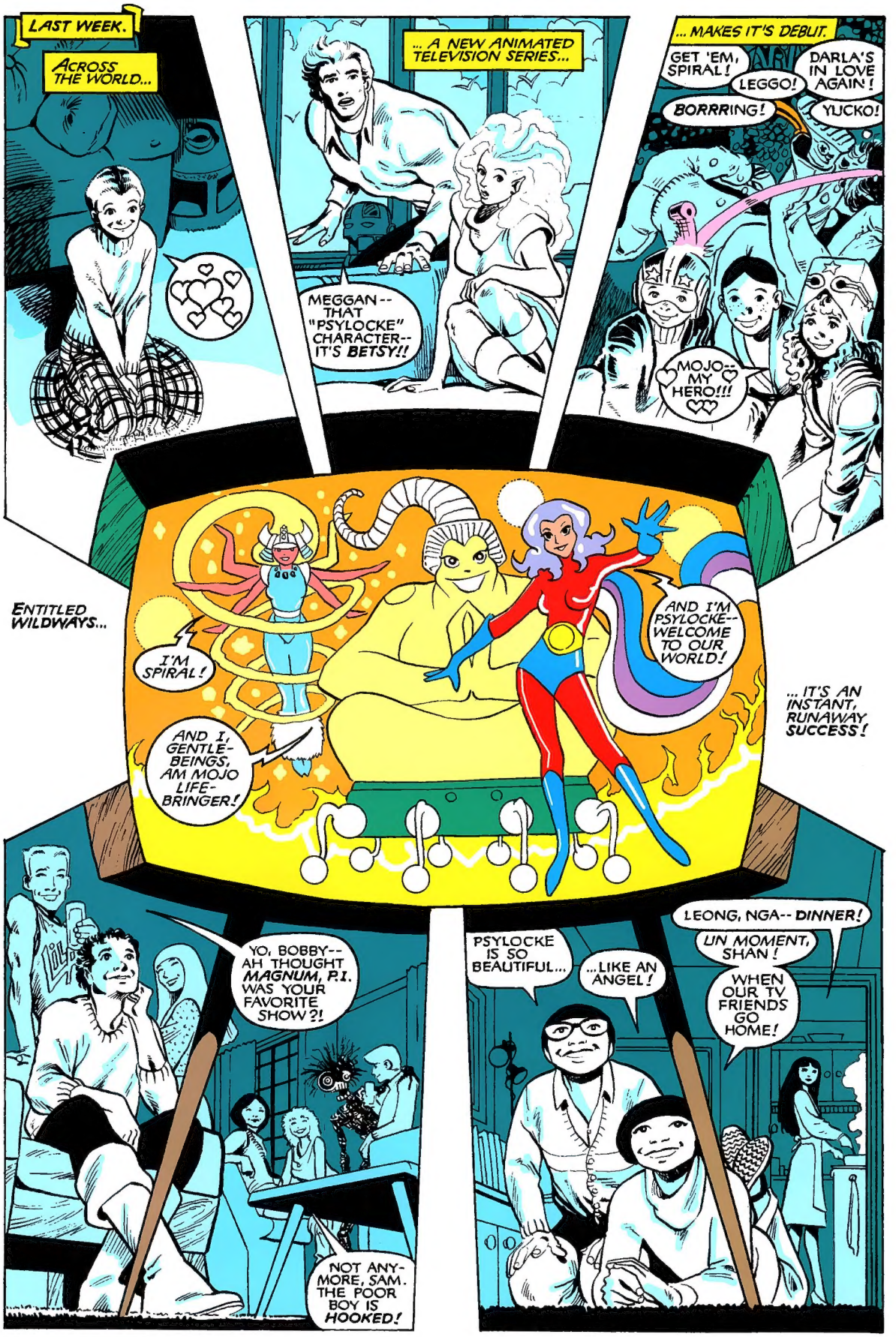
THE CHALLENGE COMES...
... IN PUTTING IT BACK TOGETHER!

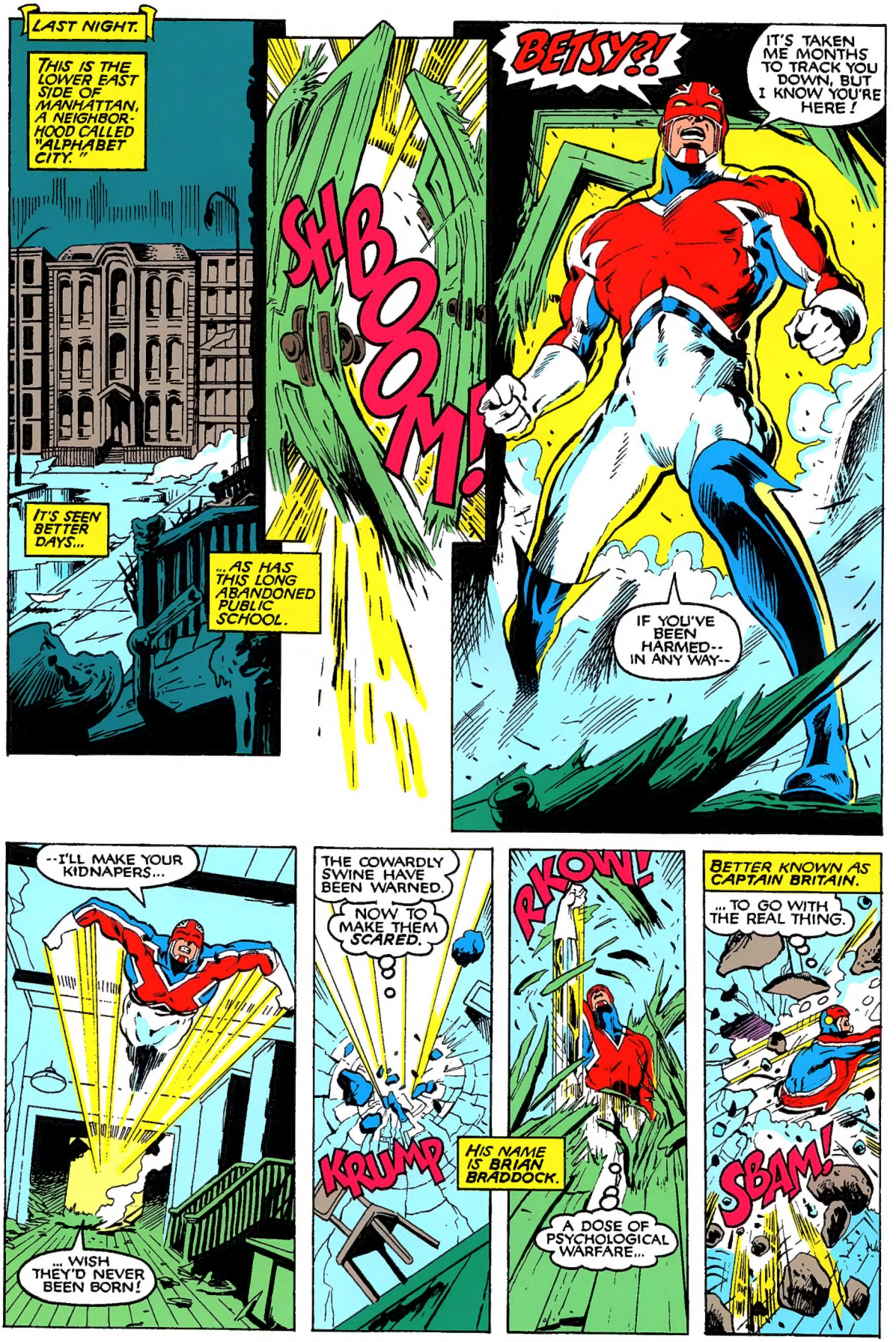
STAN LEE PRESENTOR	CHRIS CLAREMONT WRITER	ALAN DAVIS ARTIST	TOM ORZECHOWSKI LETTERER	GLYNIS OLIVER COLORIST	ANN NOCENTI EDITOR	JIM SHOOTER EDITOR IN CHIEF	CHRIS CLAREMONT & BOB McLEOD CREATORS



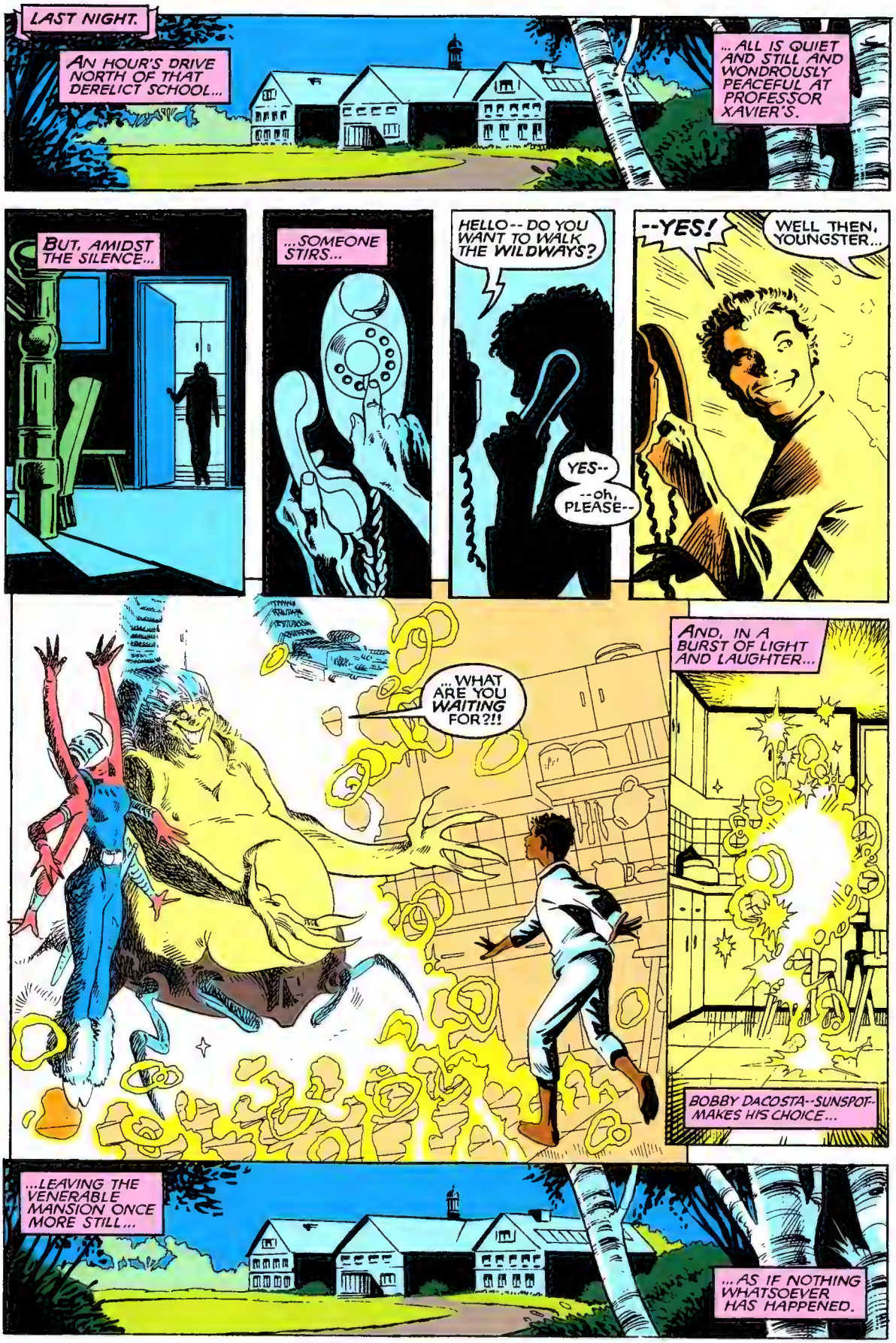

WHO THE HECK CARES?!!
NICE SHOT.
A TERRIFIC METAPHOR FOR MY LIFE.
PROBLEMS, DOUG?
NO.
YEAH.
WANT TO TALK?
NO!
YEAH.
Oh, GEEZ, DANI--I KNOW THIS SOUNDS STUPID--
--BUT SOMETIMES, BEING A MUTANT DRIVES ME CRAZY!
XAVIER
LOOK AT ME-- I'M GIFTED WITH THE ABILITY TO UNSCRAMBLE VIRTUALLY ANY LANGUAGE THERE IS. AS CYPHER, I'M PART OF A TEAM THAT'S BEEN TO THE STARS-- I'VE MET THE NORSE GODS IN ASGARD--
-- I'VE HELPED SAVE THE WHOLE WORLD!
AND I CAN'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT IT!!
NOT A WORD, NOT EVEN TO MY PARENTS.
BECAUSE I'M AFRAID THEY'LL THINK I'M CRACKERS-- OR, WORSE, COME AFTER ME AS PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE.
WHEN I'M IN TOWN, HANGING OUT-- WITH KIDS WHO WERE MY PALS BEFORE I TRANSFERRED HERE--
XAVIER'S
--I DON'T FIT IN.
THE STUFF THEY TALK ABOUT, IT DOESN'T HAVE MUCH MEANING FOR ME ANYMORE. SO THEY FIGURE I'VE TURNED INTO A SNOB.
IT'S LIKE, THE ONLY PEOPLE I CAN TRUST AS FRIENDS--THE ONLY ONES I'M ALLOWED TO EVEN KNOW-- ARE IN THIS SCHOOL.

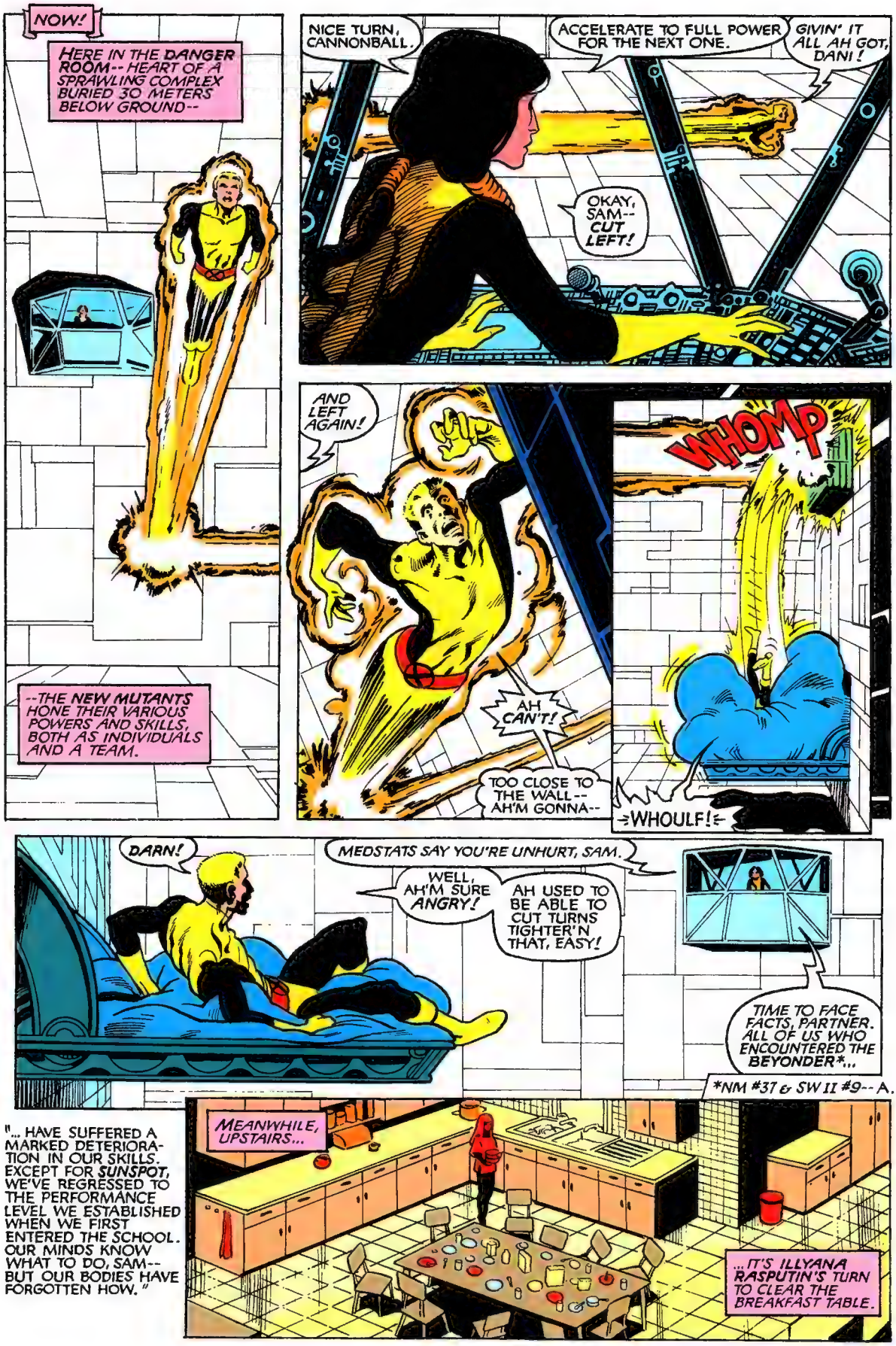

I FEEL LIKE AN OUTCAST.
OR A CONVICT, IN THIS PRISON FOR LIFE.
YOU THINK YOU'RE ALONE IN THAT REGARD, DOUGLAS?
A WHILE BACK, I ASKED MYSELF, WHICH AM I-- CHEYENNE, MUTANT, VALKYRIE, PLAIN OLD ORDINARY GIRL?
I STILL HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT THE ANSWER. MAYBE I NEVER WILL.
MY POWER AS A VALKYRIE ALLOWS ME TO SEE WHO'S ABOUT TO DIE, AND IF I CHOOSE, I CAN BATTLE DEATH TO SAVE THEM. BUT EVEN WHEN I WIN, I'M ONLY DELAYING THE INEVITABLE. NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY, I CAN'T KEEP PEOPLE ALIVE FOREVER.
HOW D'YOU THINK THAT MAKES ME FEEL?!
EACH MORNING, I WONDER IF I'LL SEE THE REAPER'S SHADOW ON THE FACE OF SOMEONE I CARE FOR, AND FOR THAT MOMENT, I'M SO SCARED...
I JUST WANT TO RUN AWAY AND HIDE.
BUT MIRAGE IS CO-LEADER OF THE NEW MUTANTS. I CAN'T DENY THAT RESPONSIBILITY, ANY MORE THAN I CAN MY POWER.
XAVIER
WE'RE ALL OF US OUTCASTS, DOUG. WE CAN EITHER GIVE UP-- ALLOW SELF-PITY TO GROW INTO A BITTERNESS THAT'LL EVENTUALLY EAT US UP INSIDE--
--OR MAKE THE BEST OF THINGS, NO MATTER WHAT.
ME, I COME FROM A PROUD, STUBBORN STOCK.
THE CHEYENNE HAVE BEEN BEATEN, BUT WE DON'T SURRENDER.
WHICH'LL IT BE FOR YOU?
XAVIER

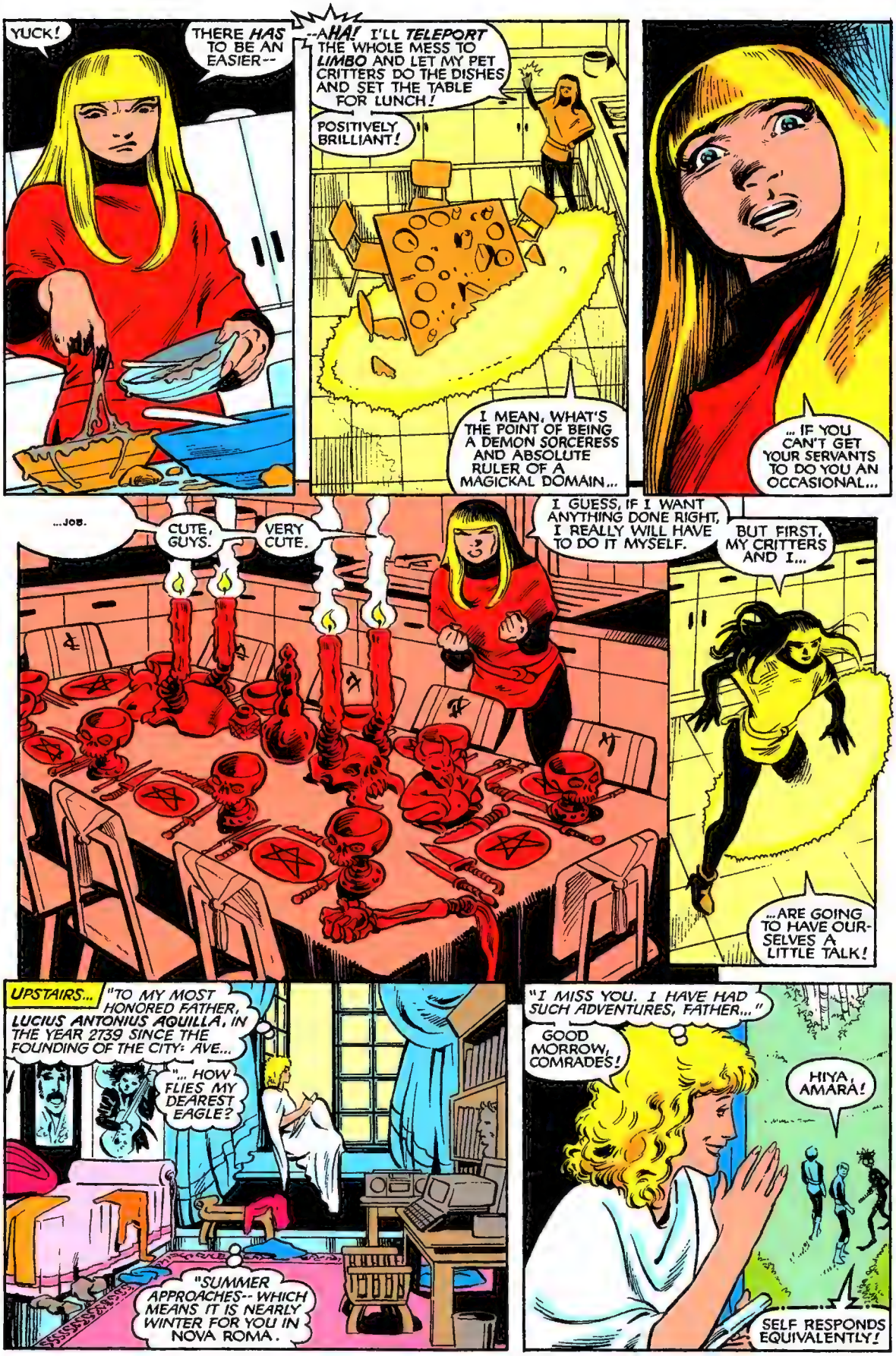

LAST WEEK.
ACROSS THE WORLD...
... A NEW ANIMATED TELEVISION SERIES...
MEGGAN-- THAT "PSYLOCKE" CHARACTER-- IT'S BETSY!!
... MAKES IT'S DEBUT.
GET 'EM, SPIRAL!
LEGGO!
DARLA'S IN LOVE AGAIN!
BORRRING!
YUCKO!
MOJO-- MY HERO!!!
ENTITLED WILDWAYS...
I'M SPIRAL!
AND I, GENTLE-BEINGS, AM MOJO LIFE-BRINGER!
AND I'M PSYLOCKE-- WELCOME TO OUR WORLD!
... IT'S AN INSTANT, RUNAWAY SUCCESS!
YO, BOBBY-- AH THOUGHT MAGNUM, P.I. WAS YOUR FAVORITE SHOW?!
NOT ANY-MORE, SAM. THE POOR BOY IS HOOKED!
PSYLOCKE IS SO BEAUTIFUL...
...LIKE AN ANGEL!
LEONG, NGA-- DINNER!
UN MOMENT, SHAN!
WHEN OUR TV FRIENDS GO HOME!

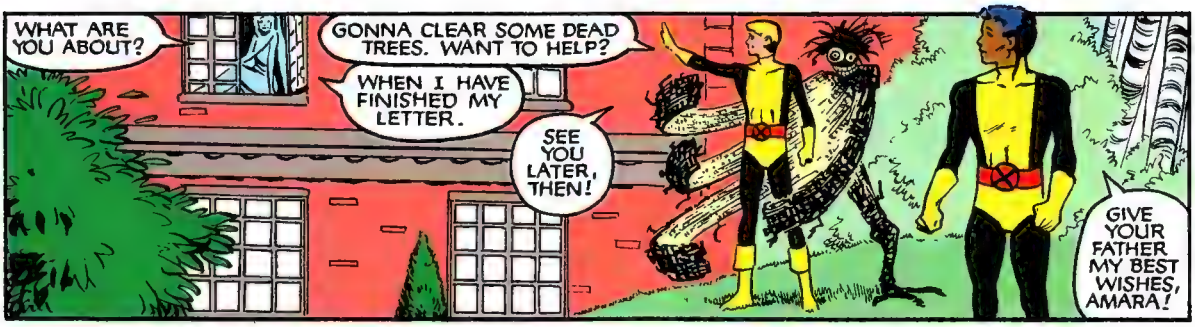

LAST NIGHT.
THIS IS THE LOWER EAST SIDE OF MANHATTAN, A NEIGHBORHOOD CALLED "ALPHABET CITY."
IT'S SEEN BETTER DAYS...
...AS HAS THIS LONG ABANDONED PUBLIC SCHOOL.
SHBOOM!
BETSY?!
IT'S TAKEN ME MONTHS TO TRACK YOU DOWN, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE HERE!
IF YOU'VE BEEN HARMED-- IN ANY WAY--
--I'LL MAKE YOUR KIDNAPERS...
...WISH THEY'D NEVER BEEN BORN!
THE COWARDLY SWINE HAVE BEEN WARNED.
NOW TO MAKE THEM SCARED.
KRUMP
HIS NAME IS BRIAN BRADDOCK.
RKOW!
A DOSE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE...
BETTER KNOWN AS CAPTAIN BRITAIN.
...TO GO WITH THE REAL THING.
SBAM!

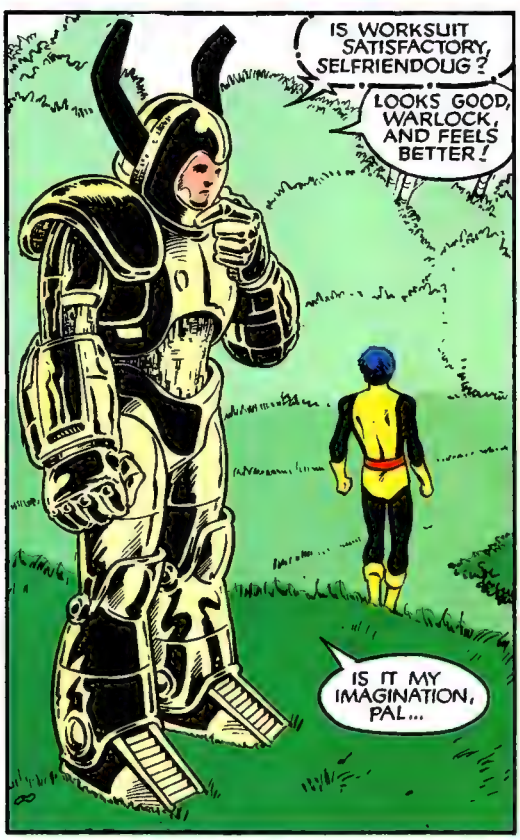
HE IS A HERO...
...POSSESSED OF POWER SUFFICIENT TO LITERALLY MOVE MOUNTAINS.
IT WILL NOT SAVE HIM.
BRIAN!
!?!
HOW DARE YOU MAKE SUCH A MESS?!
NO!
WE RAISED YOU BETTER THAN THAT, YOUNG MAN!
IT CAN'T BE POSSIBLE! THIS IS MADNESS!!
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF.
NO--PLEASE--YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I CAN EXPLAIN!
I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING WRONG, I'VE COME TO RESCUE BETSY!
IT'S YOU, BRIAN, WHO IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.
I'M SORRY.
PLEASE, DON'T BE ANGRY.
WE CANNOT BEGIN TO TELL YOU HOW BITTERLY YOU'VE DISAPPOINTED US.
OF THAT, MY LAD, YOU MAY BE CERTAIN.
I WON'T DO IT AGAIN!
MUMMY--DADDY--
--FORGIVE ME--PLEASE--FROM NOW ON, I PROMISE--
--I'LL BE A GOOD BOY!

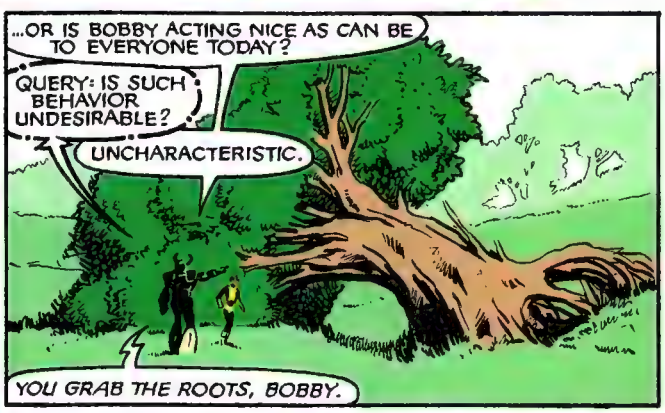

LAST NIGHT.
AN HOUR'S DRIVE NORTH OF THAT DERELICT SCHOOL...
... ALL IS QUIET AND STILL AND WONDROUSLY PEACEFUL AT PROFESSOR XAVIER'S.
BUT, AMIDST THE SILENCE...
...SOMEONE STIRS...
HELLO-- DO YOU WANT TO WALK THE WILDWAYS?
YES--
--oh, PLEASE--
--YES!
WELL THEN, YOUNGSTER...
... WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!!
AND, IN A BURST OF LIGHT AND LAUGHTER...
BOBBY DACOSTA--SUNSPOT--MAKES HIS CHOICE...
...LEAVING THE VENERABLE MANSION ONCE MORE STILL...
...AS IF NOTHING WHATSOEVER HAS HAPPENED.


NOW!
HERE IN THE DANGER ROOM-- HEART OF A SPRAWLING COMPLEX BURIED 30 METERS BELOW GROUND--
--THE NEW MUTANTS HONE THEIR VARIOUS POWERS AND SKILLS, BOTH AS INDIVIDUALS AND A TEAM.
NICE TURN, CANNONBALL.
ACCELERATE TO FULL POWER FOR THE NEXT ONE.
GIVIN' IT ALL AH GOT, DANI!
OKAY, SAM-- CUT LEFT!
AND LEFT AGAIN!
AH CAN'T!
TOO CLOSE TO THE WALL-- AH'M GONNA--
WHOMP
WHOULF!
DARN!
MEDSTATS SAY YOU'RE UNHURT, SAM.
WELL, AH'M SURE ANGRY!
AH USED TO BE ABLE TO CUT TURNS TIGHTER'N THAT, EASY!
TIME TO FACE FACTS, PARTNER. ALL OF US WHO ENCOUNTERED THE BEYONDER*...
*NM #37 & SW II #9-- A.
"... HAVE SUFFERED A MARKED DETERIORATION IN OUR SKILLS. EXCEPT FOR SUNSPOT, WE'VE REGRESSED TO THE PERFORMANCE LEVEL WE ESTABLISHED WHEN WE FIRST ENTERED THE SCHOOL. OUR MINDS KNOW WHAT TO DO, SAM-- BUT OUR BODIES HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW."
MEANWHILE, UPSTAIRS...
...IT'S ILLYANA RASPUTIN'S TURN TO CLEAR THE BREAKFAST TABLE.


YUCK!
THERE HAS TO BE AN EASIER--
--AHA! I'LL TELEPORT THE WHOLE MESS TO LIMBO AND LET MY PET CRITTERS DO THE DISHES AND SET THE TABLE FOR LUNCH!
POSITIVELY BRILLIANT!
I MEAN, WHAT'S THE POINT OF BEING A DEMON SORCERESS AND ABSOLUTE RULER OF A MAGICKAL DOMAIN...
... IF YOU CAN'T GET YOUR SERVANTS TO DO YOU AN OCCASIONAL...
...JOB.
CUTE, GUYS.
VERY CUTE.
I GUESS, IF I WANT ANYTHING DONE RIGHT, I REALLY WILL HAVE TO DO IT MYSELF.
BUT FIRST, MY CRITTERS AND I...
...ARE GOING TO HAVE OURSELVES A LITTLE TALK!
UPSTAIRS...
"TO MY MOST HONORED FATHER, LUCIUS ANTONIUS AQUILLA, IN THE YEAR 2739 SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE CITY: AVE...
"... HOW FLIES MY DEAREST EAGLE?
"SUMMER APPROACHES-- WHICH MEANS IT IS NEARLY WINTER FOR YOU IN NOVA ROMA.
"I MISS YOU. I HAVE HAD SUCH ADVENTURES, FATHER..."
GOOD MORROW, COMRADES!
HIYA, AMARA!
SELF RESPONDS EQUIVALENTLY!

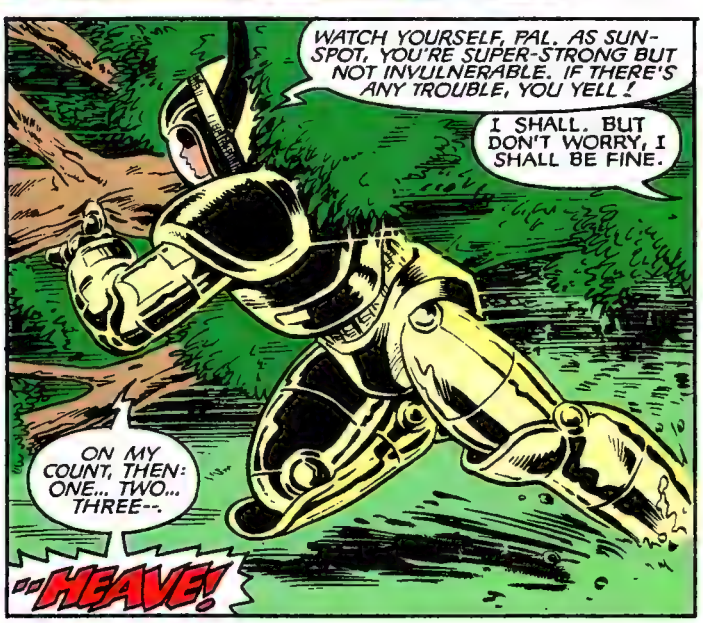

WHAT ARE YOU ABOUT?
GONNA CLEAR SOME DEAD TREES. WANT TO HELP?
WHEN I HAVE FINISHED MY LETTER.
SEE YOU LATER, THEN!
GIVE YOUR FATHER MY BEST WISHES, AMARA!

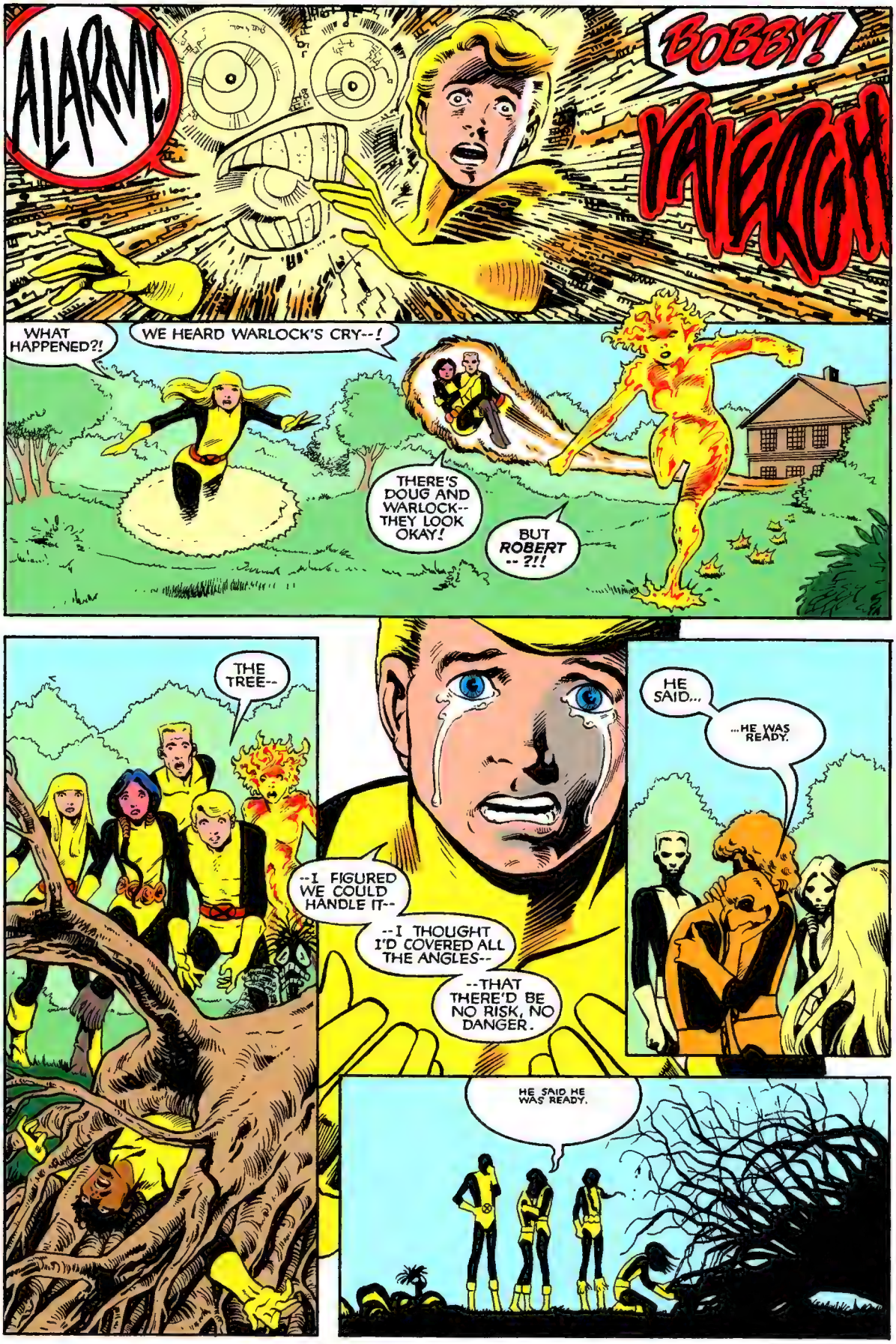

IS WORKSUIT SATISFACTORY, SELFRIENDOUG?
LOOKS GOOD, WARLOCK, AND FEELS BETTER!
IS IT MY IMAGINATION, PAL...


...OR IS BOBBY ACTING NICE AS CAN BE TO EVERYONE TODAY?
QUERY: IS SUCH BEHAVIOR UNDESIRABLE?
UNCHARACTERISTIC.
YOU GRAB THE ROOTS, BOBBY.

I'LL TAKE THE CROWN...
SELFSENSORS REGISTER MINOR ANOMALIES IN SUNSPOT'S PHYSIOLOGY.
YOU MEAN HE'S SICK?

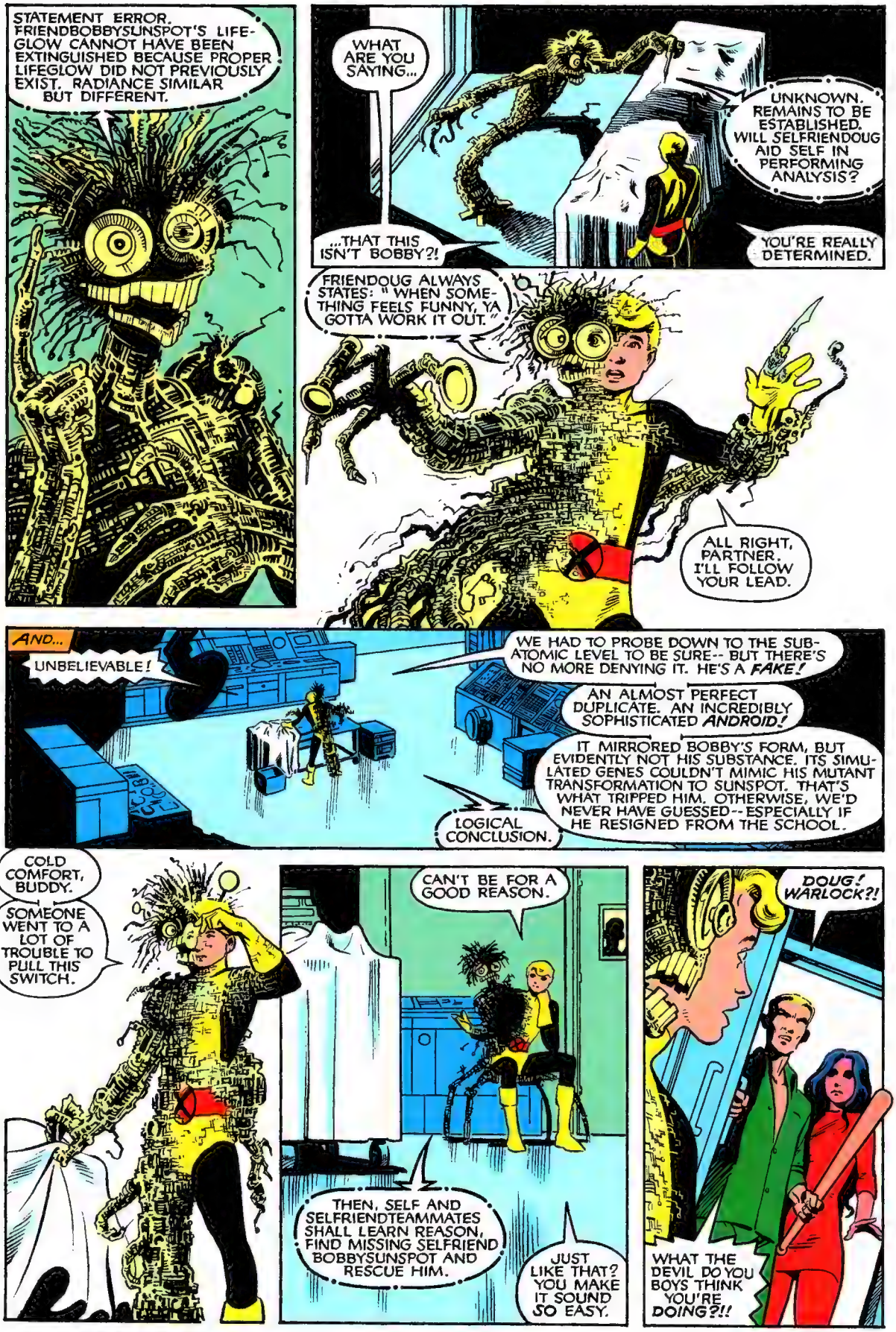
HEY, BOBBY, YOU SURE YOU'RE UP TO THIS?
OF COURSE, DOUGLAS. READY WHEN YOU ARE.


WATCH YOURSELF, PAL. AS SUNSPOT, YOU'RE SUPER-STRONG BUT NOT INVULNERABLE. IF THERE'S ANY TROUBLE, YOU YELL!
I SHALL. BUT DON'T WORRY, I SHALL BE FINE.
ON MY COUNT, THEN: ONE... TWO... THREE--.
HEAVE!


ALARM!
BOBBY!
YAAAGH!
WHAT HAPPENED?!
WE HEARD WARLOCK'S CRY--!
THERE'S DOUG AND WARLOCK--THEY LOOK OKAY!
BUT ROBERT -- ?!!
THE TREE--
--I FIGURED WE COULD HANDLE IT--
--I THOUGHT I'D COVERED ALL THE ANGLES--
--THAT THERE'D BE NO RISK, NO DANGER.
HE SAID...
...HE WAS READY.
HE SAID HE WAS READY.

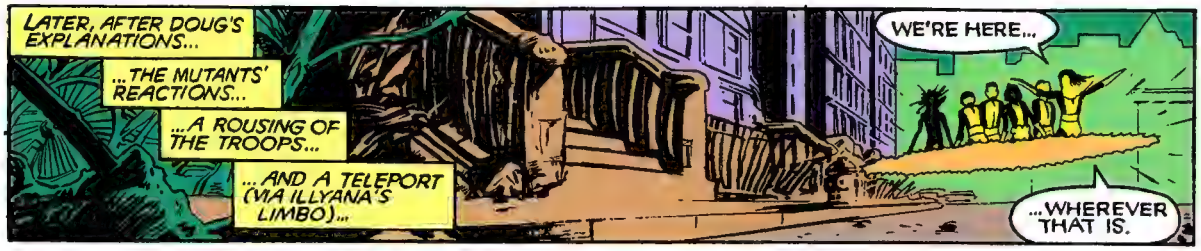
LATER...
NO LUCK TRACKIN' DOWN MAGNETO. AH KNOW IT'S HIS PLACE TO NOTIFY BOBBY'S FOLKS, BUT DOES ANYONE THINK AH OUGHT'A...?
LEAVE IT TILL MORNING, SAM.
IT'S MY FAULT.
I KILLED HIM.
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.
THAT SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER?
JUST DON'T BLAME YOURSELF...
WHO SHOULD I BLAME, THEN?!
YOU'RE THE VALKYRIE, DANI! WHY DIDN'T YOUR POWER WARN YOU OF BOBBY'S DANGER?!
I WISH I KNEW, DOUG. THE POWER'S NEVER FAILED ME BEFORE.
IT PICKED A HECKUVA TIME TO START!
DOUGLAS!
LET HIM GO, DANI.
THIS IS SOMETHING...
... A BODY NEEDS TO WORK THROUGH FOR HIMSELF.
NO!
SELF FEELS SELF'S TRUEFRIEND'S PAIN!
SELF MUST BE WITH HIM!!

BOBBY'S IN HERE.
FUNNY. INFIRMARY NEVER FELT SO COLD-- OR SCARY-- BEFORE.
HI, PAL.
THIS IS CRAZY.
I KNOW...
GHOULISH.
... WE NEVER REALLY GOT ON.
DON'T DO THIS TO YOURSELF!
I...
...I'M SORRY, ROBERTO.
PLEASE...
...I NEVER MEANT...
... I TRIED...
...I'M REALLY...
...FORGIVE ME!
FRIENDOUG?
WARLOCK -- WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
PREPARING TO RESOLVE DATA ANOMALIES RELATING TO SELFRIENDBOBBY.
HUH?!?
'LOCK-- DON'T-- THIS IS WRONG-- OUR FRIEND IS DEAD-- HIS LIFEGLOW HAS GONE OUT-- LET HIM LIE IN PEACE.


STATEMENT ERROR. FRIENDBOBBYSUNSPOT'S LIFE-GLOW CANNOT HAVE BEEN EXTINGUISHED BECAUSE PROPER LIFEGLOW DID NOT PREVIOUSLY EXIST. RADIANCE SIMILAR BUT DIFFERENT.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...
...THAT THIS ISN'T BOBBY?!
UNKNOWN. REMAINS TO BE ESTABLISHED. WILL SELFRIENDOUG AID SELF IN PERFORMING ANALYSIS?
YOU'RE REALLY DETERMINED.
FRIENDOUG ALWAYS STATES: " WHEN SOMETHING FEELS FUNNY, YA GOTTA WORK IT OUT."
ALL RIGHT, PARTNER. I'LL FOLLOW YOUR LEAD.
AND...
UNBELIEVABLE!
WE HAD TO PROBE DOWN TO THE SUB-ATOMIC LEVEL TO BE SURE-- BUT THERE'S NO MORE DENYING IT. HE'S A FAKE!
AN ALMOST PERFECT DUPLICATE. AN INCREDIBLY SOPHISTICATED ANDROID!
IT MIRRORED BOBBY'S FORM, BUT EVIDENTLY NOT HIS SUBSTANCE. ITS SIMULATED GENES COULDN'T MIMIC HIS MUTANT TRANSFORMATION TO SUNSPOT. THAT'S WHAT TRIPPED HIM. OTHERWISE, WE'D NEVER HAVE GUESSED--ESPECIALLY IF HE RESIGNED FROM THE SCHOOL.
LOGICAL CONCLUSION.
COLD COMFORT, BUDDY.
SOMEONE WENT TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO PULL THIS SWITCH.
CAN'T BE FOR A GOOD REASON.
THEN, SELF AND SELFRIENDTEAMMATES SHALL LEARN REASON, FIND MISSING SELFRIEND BOBBYSUNSPOT AND RESCUE HIM.
JUST LIKE THAT? YOU MAKE IT SOUND SO EASY.
DOUG! WARLOCK?!
WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU BOYS THINK YOU'RE DOING?!!

ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE...
"SEE MY SWEET AND SILKEN PSYLOCKE...
"...HOW GENEROUS IS YOUR LORD AND MASTER, MOJO.
"NEW EYES-- WONDROUS EYES-- HAVE I MADE FOR YOU...
"... WHOSE SUBSTANCE BLENDS YOUR SOUL WITH MINE.
NOW WE'LL NEVER BE APART!
SHE'S THRILLED.
OF COURSE.
JUST AS YOU WERE, DANCER...
... WHEN I MADE YOU WHAT YOU ARE.
WHAT I AM, MOJO, IS NOT WHAT I WAS...
...NOR WHAT I WILL BE--
--WHEN I DANCE YOU OFF YOUR THRONE AND MAKE IT MINE!
YOU HAVE YOUR PRECIOUS TOYS, SCREWLOOSE. WHAT COMES NEXT?
DO YOU INTEND TO STAND HERE WATCHING, 'TILL THEY ROT?
ROT? ROT?!
NOBODY ROTS, UNLESS I SAY SO!
AND ANYONE WHO TRIES...
...WILL DIE TO REGRET IT.
AN ARTISTE, SPIRAL, CANNOT CREATE EPICS WITHOUT PROPER TOOLS
I'M BORED WITH THE ONES AT HOME.

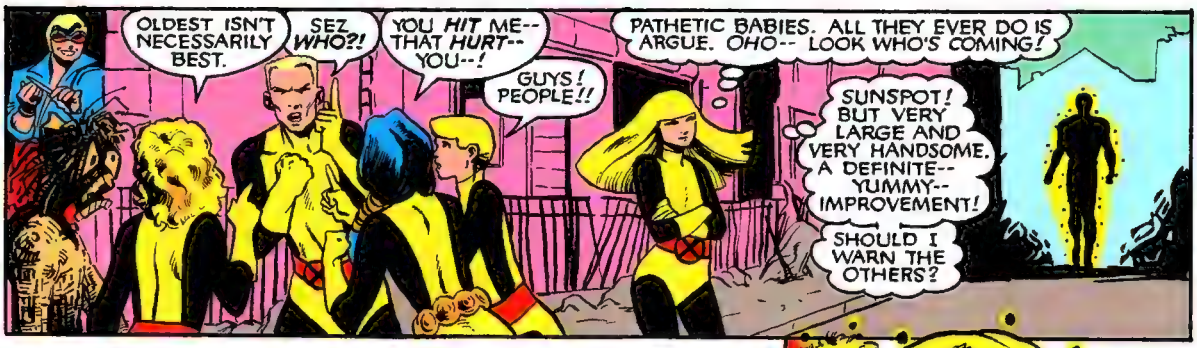
THESE SPINEFUL BABES WILL SERVE ME SO MUCH BETTER.
YOU LED ME TO THEM, SPIRAL--TELL ME THEIR NAMES...
...BEFORE I CAST THAT WORST PART OF THEM FOREVER AWAY...
...AND TURN THEM INTO STARS!
MOST ARE CONNECTED WITH XAVIER'S SCHOOL--WHOSE X-MEN I'VE COME TO DEARLY HATE.
THE GIRL IN THE SKIRT IS RAHNE SINCLAIR--WOLFSBANE--
--CLASSMATE OF THE BOY BESIDE HER, ROBERTO DACOSTA.
WE TOOK THESE TWINS--LEONG AND NGA--FROM THEIR OLDER SISTER, ANOTHER OF XAVIER'S PROTEGES.
LEAVING, LASTLY, THREE OF THE BRATPACK--
--BUTCH--DARLA--ALFIE--
--WHOSE TRANSGRESSION WAS TO BEFRIEND OUR GREATEST FOE, THE ACCURSED LUCKY ONE, LONGSHOT.*
*SEE LONGSHOT LIMITED SERIES
NOW, SWEET PSYLOCKE LET YOUR POWER WORK THROUGH THE TWINS--TEMPLATE--TO STEAL MY PET'S SOULS--AS I DID YOURS--
--AND SET THEM HAPPILY RIDING THE CAROUSEL WITHIN YOUR MIND...
...WHILE THEIR BODIES ARE RE-SHAPED FROM CRASS AND FLAWED INDIVIDUALITY...
...TO THE UNITY OF PRISTINE PERFECTION!
AND WHEN THE ENTIRE PROCESS IS COMPLETE--
--WHEN ALL THAT'S LEFT OF MY...BRATPACK, IN FLESH AND SPIRIT...
...IS WHAT I'VE PLACED THERE--
--THEN WE'LL LEAVE THIS DUNGHEAP PURGATORY PLANET...
...AND RIDE MOJO'S WILDWAYS TO MOJOWORLD AND--GLORY!!
THE STAGE IS SET, MY CAST ASSEMBLED
NOW, THE FUN REALLY BEGINS!


LATER, AFTER DOUG'S EXPLANATIONS...
...THE MUTANTS' REACTIONS...
...A ROUSING OF THE TROOPS...
...AND A TELEPORT (VIA ILLYANA'S LIMBO)...
WE'RE HERE...
...WHEREVER THAT IS.

SELF'S SENSORS HAVE NEXUSED SELFRIENDBOBBY WITHIN THAT STRUCTURE.
OLD SCHOOL. RUN DOWN, LIKE THE NEIGHBORHOOD.
MY PORTABLE CEREBRO CONFIRMS WARLOCK'S SCAN. IT'S BOBBY-- AND HE ISN'T ALONE!
YO! KIDDIES!

YOU LOOKING FOR TROUBLE?
IF SO-- I HOPE SO-- YOU'VE SURE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE.
YOU HAVE A NAME, FELLA?
HEY, CHIEF--

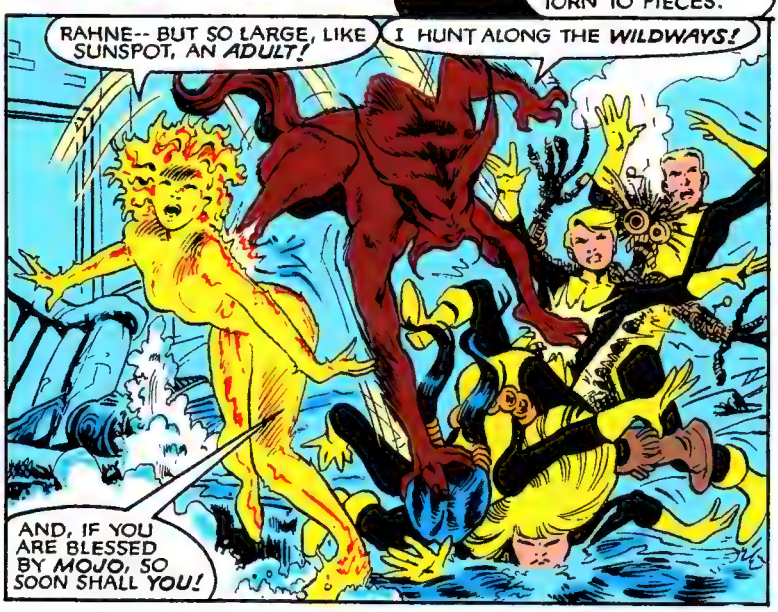
--AH'M OLDEST, AH'LL ASK!
CANNONB--
--AIOWW!
AH'M TIRED O' YOUR LIP, Ms. HIGH-AN'-MIGHTY MOONSTAR. YOU'RE JUST A DUMB-BUNNY GIRL --AH'M A BOY! AH SHOULD BE IN CHARGE! AN' FROM NOW ON...
...AH WILL BE!
I REALLY LOVE IT, SEEING FRIENDS ACT LIKE ENEMIES.
I'M BUTCH.
BUT YOU CAN CALL ME SNITCH.
BET YOU'LL NEVER GUESS MY POWER. AN' EVEN IF YOU DO, IT WON'T DO A BLESSED BIT OF GOOD!

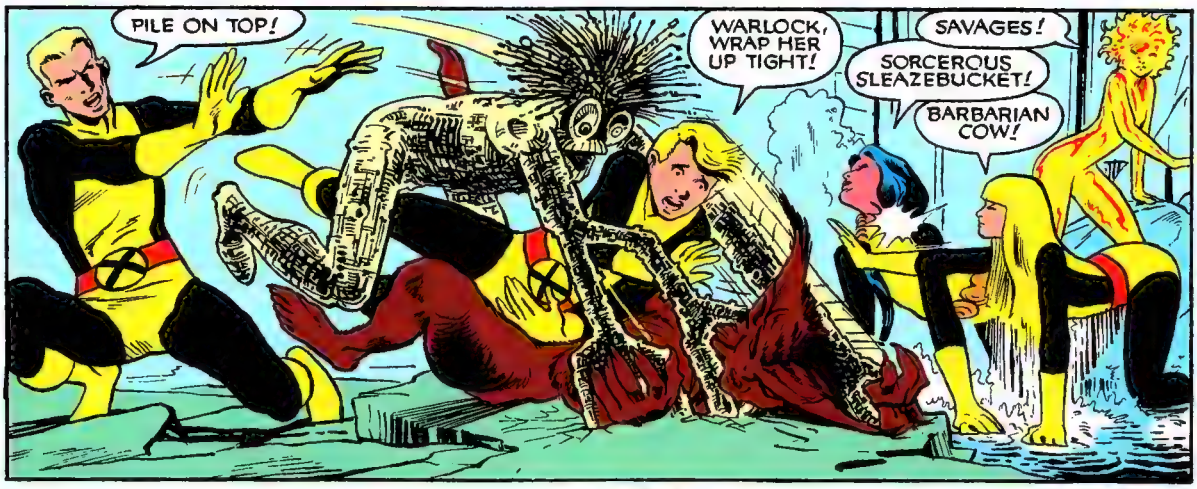

OLDEST ISN'T NECESSARILY BEST.
SEZ WHO?!
YOU HIT ME-- THAT HURT-- YOU--!
GUYS! PEOPLE!!
PATHETIC BABIES. ALL THEY EVER DO IS ARGUE. OHO-- LOOK WHO'S COMING!
SUNSPOT! BUT VERY LARGE AND VERY HANDSOME. A DEFINITE-- YUMMY-- IMPROVEMENT!
SHOULD I WARN THE OTHERS?

WHY BOTHER?
THOOM

MAGMA!
I'LL CATCH--
OUCH!
PLEBIAN CLOD! THAT WILL TEACH YOU NEVER TO LAY A HAND ON...
...THE DAUGHTER OF THE FIRST SENATOR OF NOVA ROMA!
TRUE FRIENDS. TRUE LOVE. WHEN SNITCH IS AROUND, ALL THOSE GOOD THINGS GET TORN TO PIECES.

AND WHAT SNITCH DOES TO YUIR SPIRITS...
...WOLFSBANE SHALL DO TO YUIR FLESH!


RAHNE-- BUT SO LARGE, LIKE SUNSPOT, AN ADULT!
I HUNT ALONG THE WILDWAYS!
AND, IF YOU ARE BLESSED BY MOJO, SO SOON SHALL YOU!

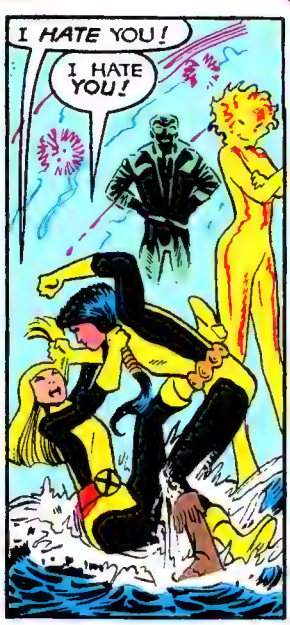

PILE ON TOP!
WARLOCK, WRAP HER UP TIGHT!
SAVAGES!
SORCEROUS SLEAZEBUCKET!
BARBARIAN COW!

CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT-- WHY'M I SAYIN', DOIN', SUCH ROTTEN--
WHIAOULP!
FIRE-WORKS!

COURTESY OF JUBILEE!
WHOSE EVERY MOVE IS A CELEBRATION!

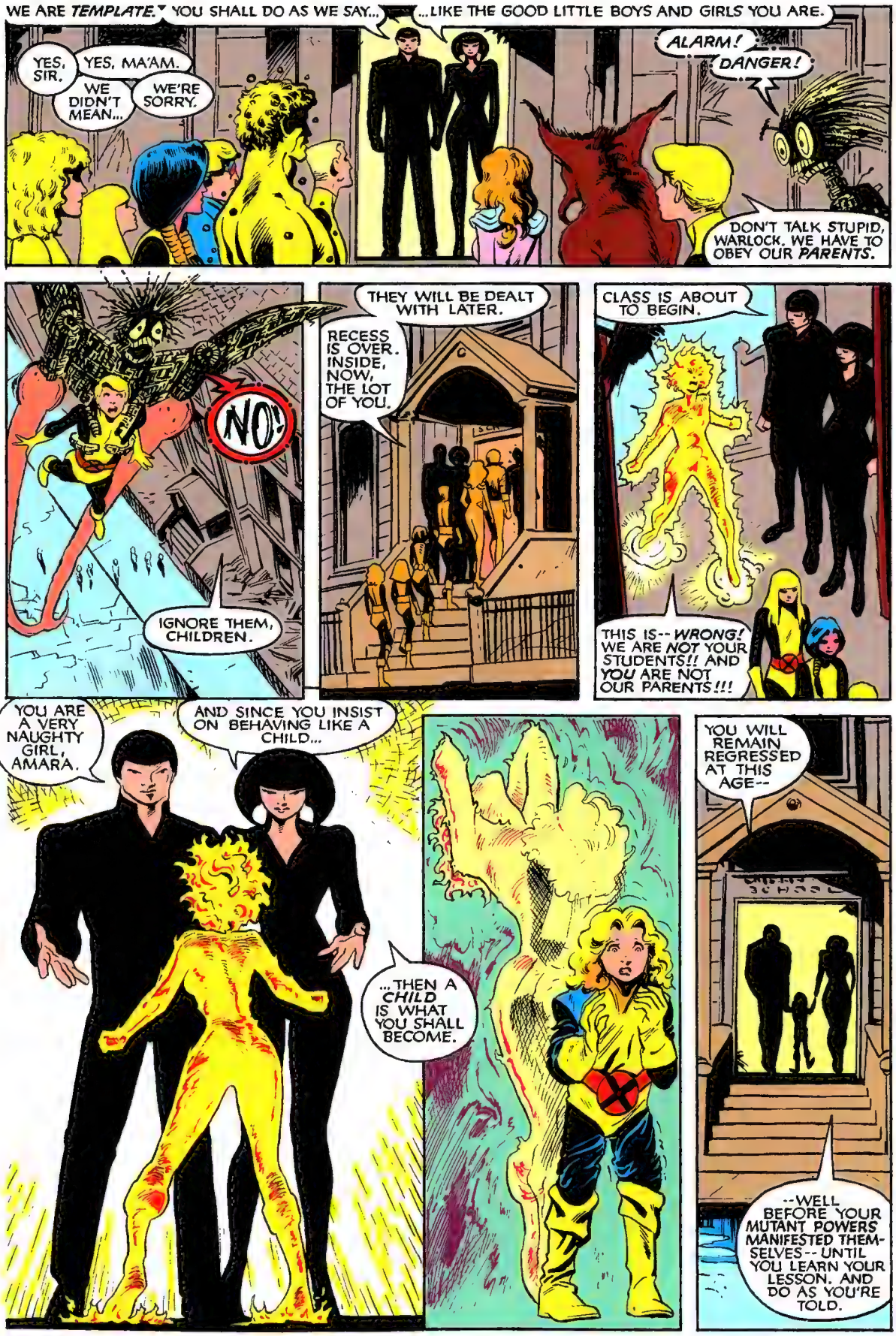
WATCH CLOSELY, DEAR CANNONHEART...
...WHILE I MAKE THE DRAB OLD ORDINARY DARKNESS FLASH WITH LIGHT AND COLOR. ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

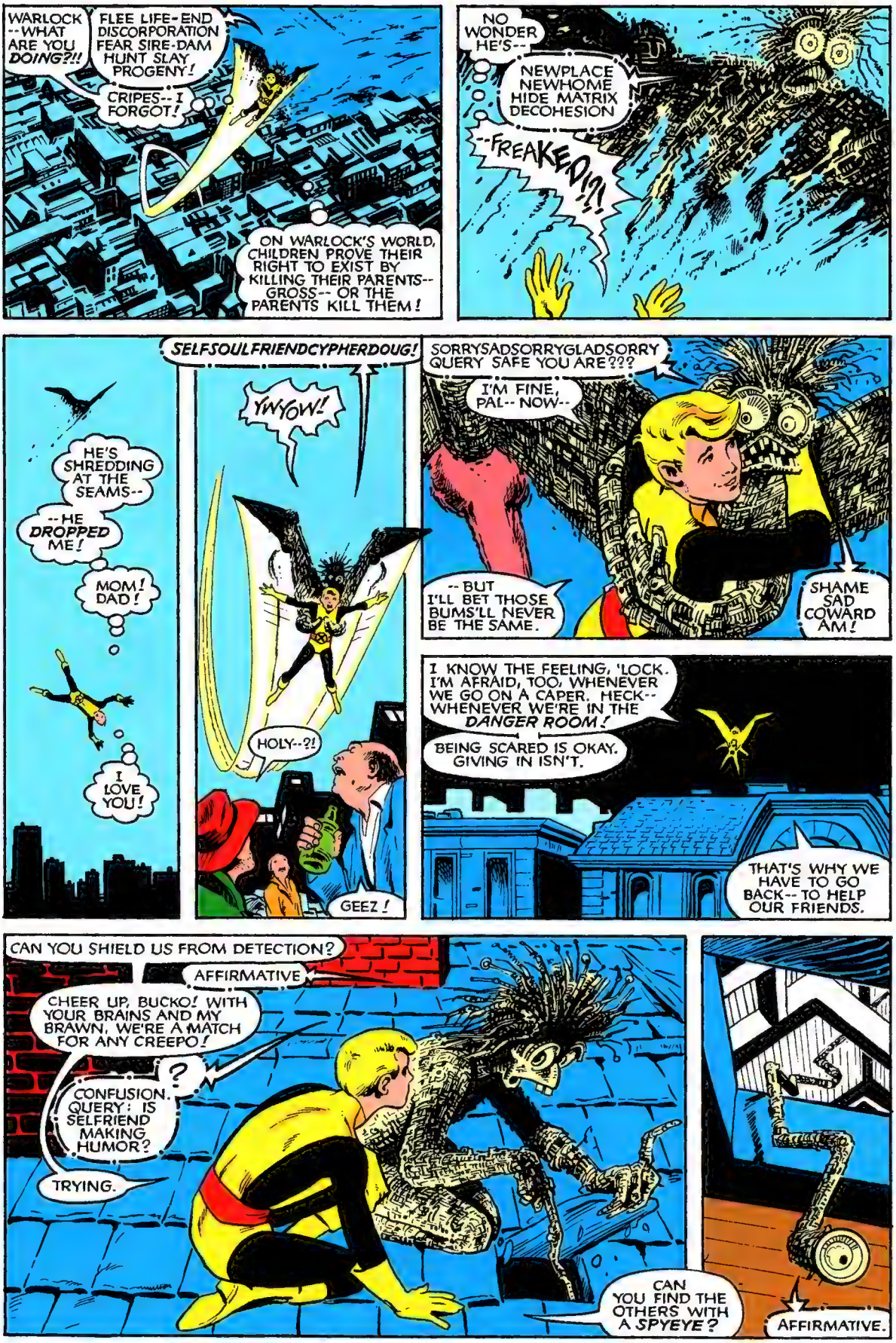
RAHNE'S GONE CRAZY--OR BEEN BRAINWASHED!
EVERY-ONE HAS!


I HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU!

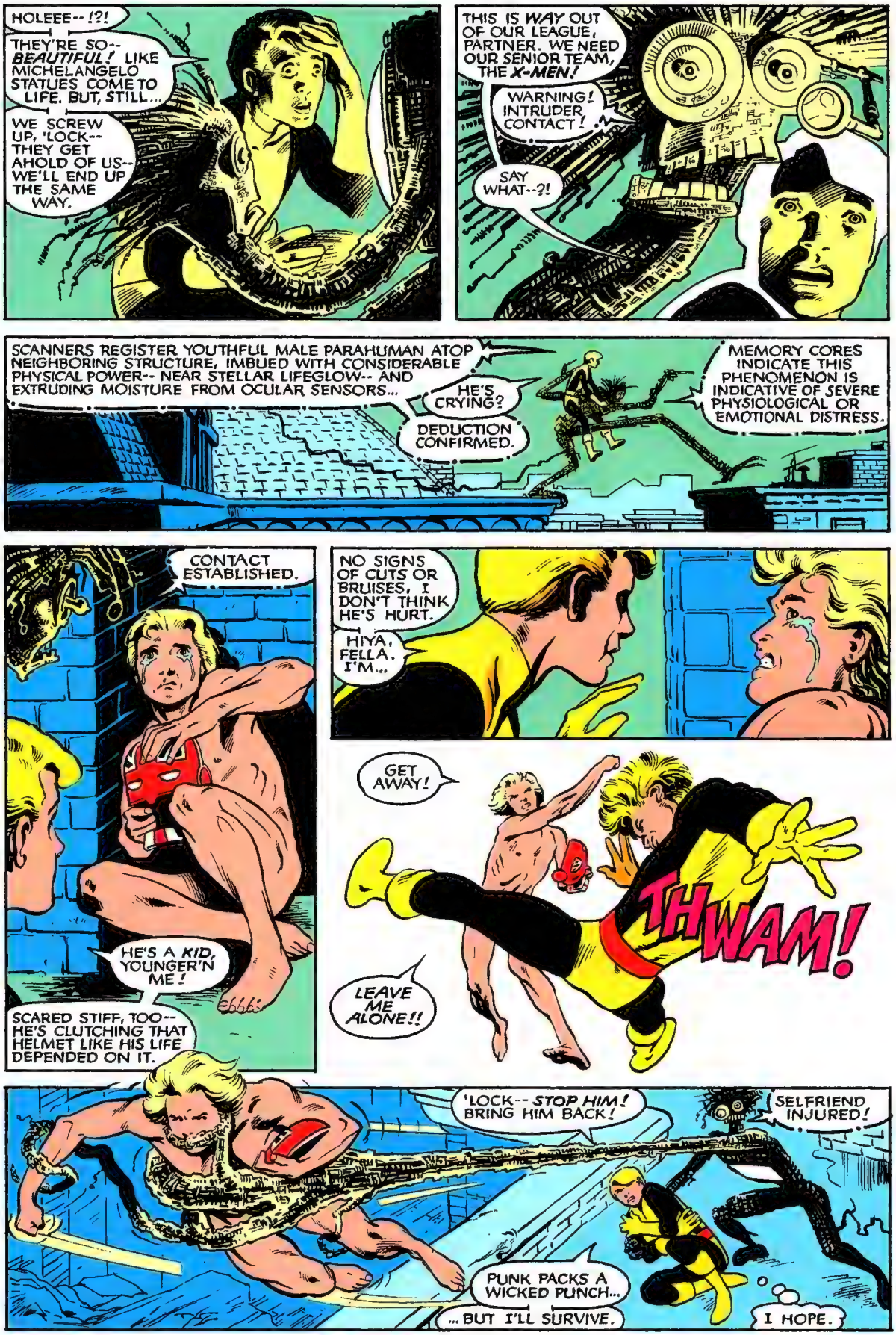
WE'RE FIGHTIN' OURSELVES MORE'N THESE OTHER FOLKS--
--JUBILEE'S FIREWORKS-- BLINDING ME-- OW!

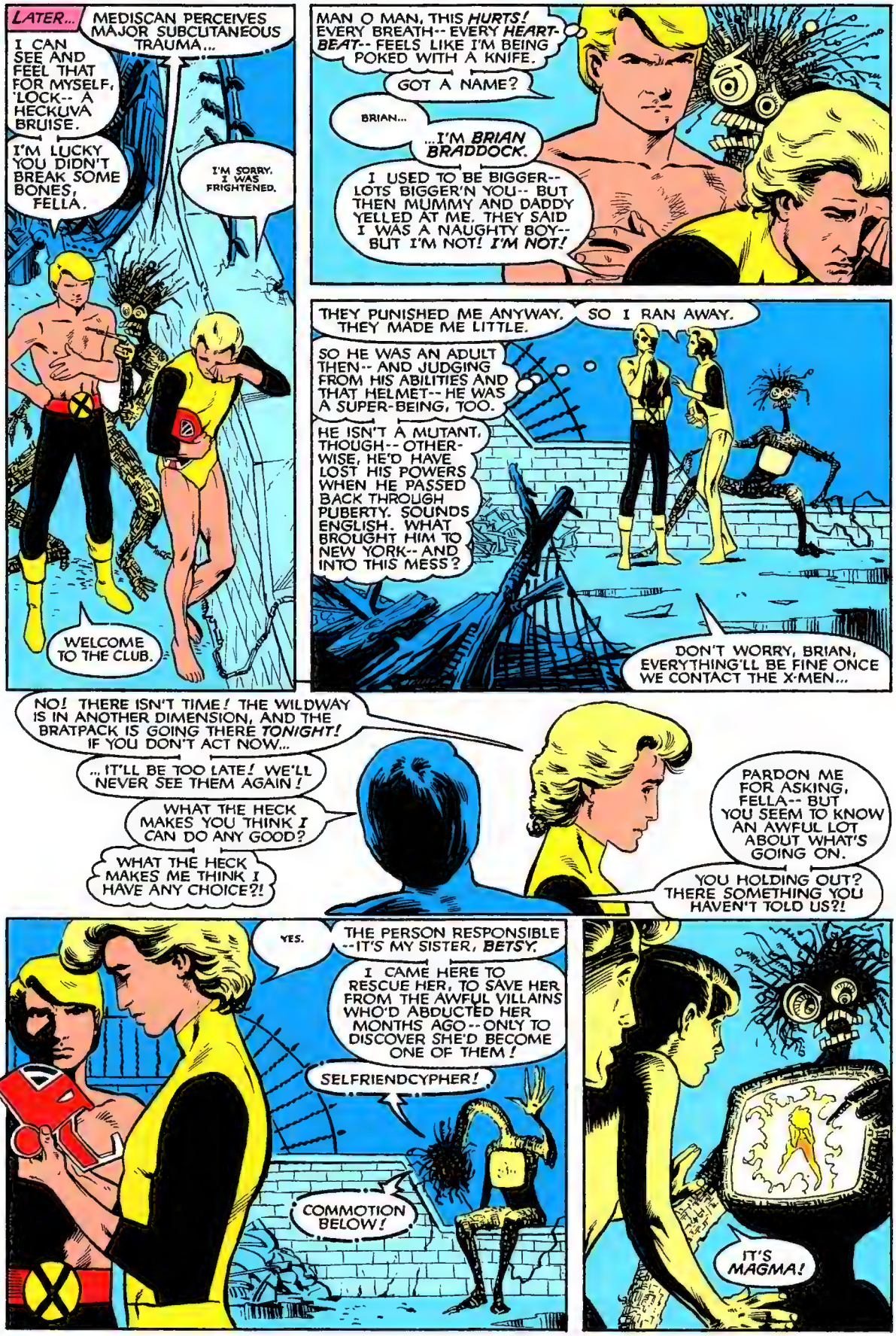
CHILDREN--
--STOP THIS DISGRACEFUL DISPLAY-- AT ONCE!!

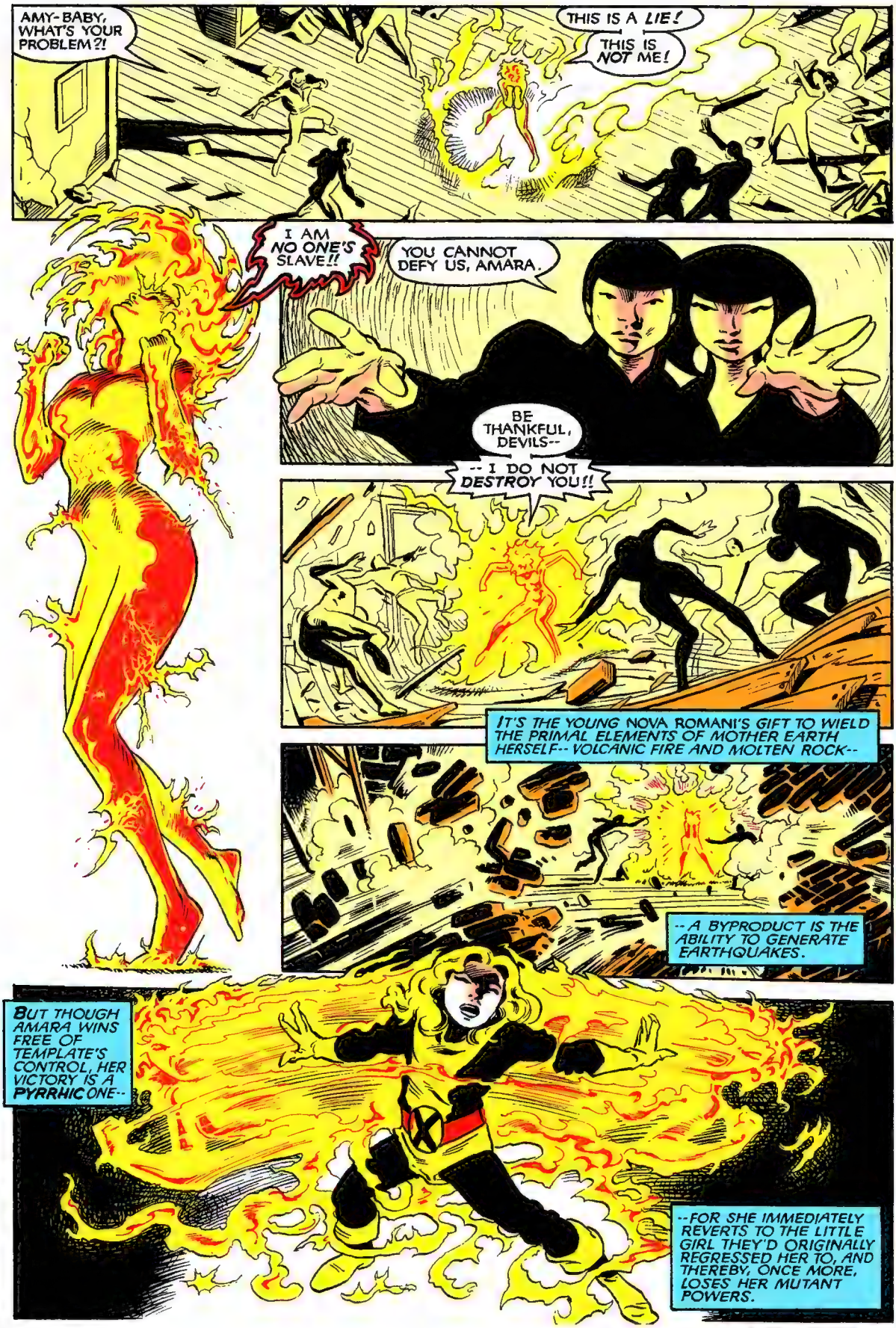

WE ARE *TEMPLATE.* YOU SHALL DO AS WE SAY...
...LIKE THE GOOD LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS YOU ARE.
YES, SIR.
YES, MA'AM.
WE DIDN'T MEAN...
WE'RE SORRY.
ALARM!
DANGER!
DON'T TALK STUPID, WARLOCK. WE HAVE TO OBEY OUR *PARENTS.*
NO!
IGNORE THEM, CHILDREN.
THEY WILL BE DEALT WITH LATER.
RECESS IS OVER. INSIDE, NOW, THE LOT OF YOU.
CLASS IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.
THIS IS-- *WRONG!* WE ARE *NOT* YOUR STUDENTS!! AND *YOU* ARE NOT OUR PARENTS!!!
YOU ARE A VERY NAUGHTY GIRL, AMARA.
AND SINCE YOU INSIST ON BEHAVING LIKE A CHILD...
...THEN A *CHILD* IS WHAT YOU SHALL BECOME.
YOU WILL REMAIN REGRESSED AT THIS AGE--
--WELL BEFORE YOUR MUTANT POWERS MANIFESTED THEMSELVES-- UNTIL YOU LEARN YOUR LESSON. AND DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.

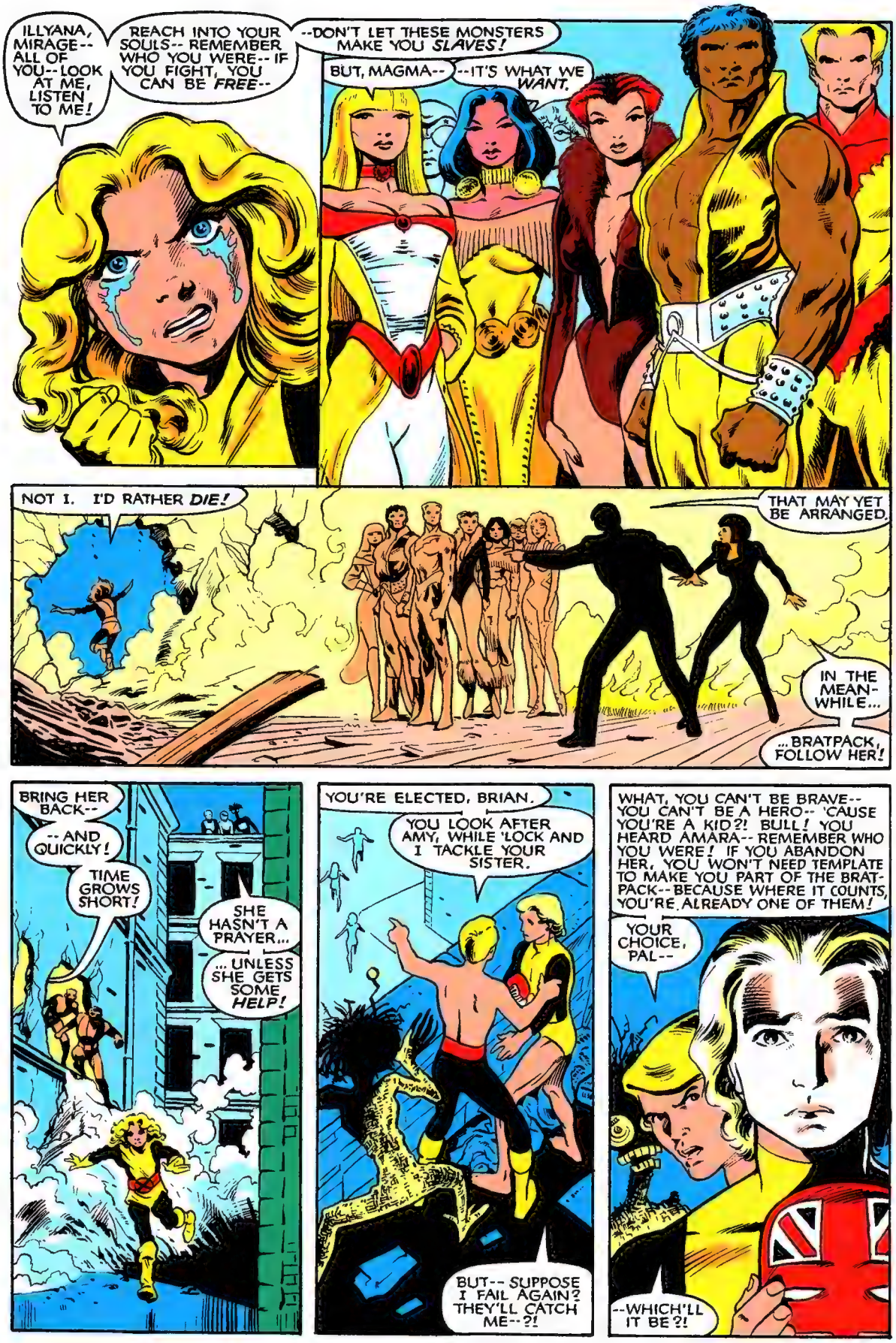

WARLOCK --WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!!
FLEE LIFE-END DISCORPORATION FEAR SIRE-DAM HUNT SLAY PROGENY!
CRIPES-- I FORGOT!
ON WARLOCK'S WORLD, CHILDREN PROVE THEIR RIGHT TO EXIST BY KILLING THEIR PARENTS-- GROSS-- OR THE PARENTS KILL THEM!
NO WONDER HE'S--
NEWPLACE NEWHOME HIDE MATRIX DECOHESION
--FREAKED!?!
SELFSOULFRIENDCYPHERDOUG!
YIKYOW!
HE'S SHREDDING AT THE SEAMS--
--HE DROPPED ME!
MOM! DAD!
I LOVE YOU!
HOLY--?!
GEEZ!
SORRYSADSORRYGLADSORRY QUERY SAFE YOU ARE???
I'M FINE, PAL-- NOW--
-- BUT I'LL BET THOSE BUMS'LL NEVER BE THE SAME.
SHAME SAD COWARD AM!
I KNOW THE FEELING, 'LOCK. I'M AFRAID, TOO, WHENEVER WE GO ON A CAPER. HECK-- WHENEVER WE'RE IN THE DANGER ROOM!
BEING SCARED IS OKAY. GIVING IN ISN'T.
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE TO GO BACK-- TO HELP OUR FRIENDS.
CAN YOU SHIELD US FROM DETECTION?
AFFIRMATIVE
CHEER UP, BUCKO! WITH YOUR BRAINS AND MY BRAWN, WE'RE A MATCH FOR ANY CREEPO!
?
CONFUSION. QUERY: IS SELFRIEND MAKING HUMOR?
TRYING.
CAN YOU FIND THE OTHERS WITH A SPYEYE?
AFFIRMATIVE.

THERE THEY ARE--
--IN A CLASS-ROOM!
"THEY MUST BE UNDER TEMPLATE'S CONTROL-- WARLOCK, LOOK! WHAT THE HECK HAVE THEY DONE TO AMARA?!"
CHILDREN, YOU ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON THE GREATEST ADVENTURE YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN--
--IS THAT NOT WONDERFUL?
Oh, PLEASE!
Oh, YES!
WE CAN'T WAIT!
CHILDREN YOU ARE-- DUTIFUL AND OBEDIENT BUT NOT YET FULLY FORMED, YOUR POWER FAR FROM REALIZED.
THAT IS OUR POWER--TO SHAPE THE SOFT AND MALLEABLE CLAY OF YOUR FLESH AND SPIRIT AS WE DEEM FIT, AND IN OUR MASTER'S IMAGE.
WE ARE THE GUIDE, THE PATTERN, THE TEMPLATE...
...WHO SHALL TRANSFORM YOU INTO ADULTS...
...PERFECT IN FORM AND FEATURE...
...FIT-- AND EAGER-- TO JOIN THE BRATPACK ON MOJO'S WILDWAY!

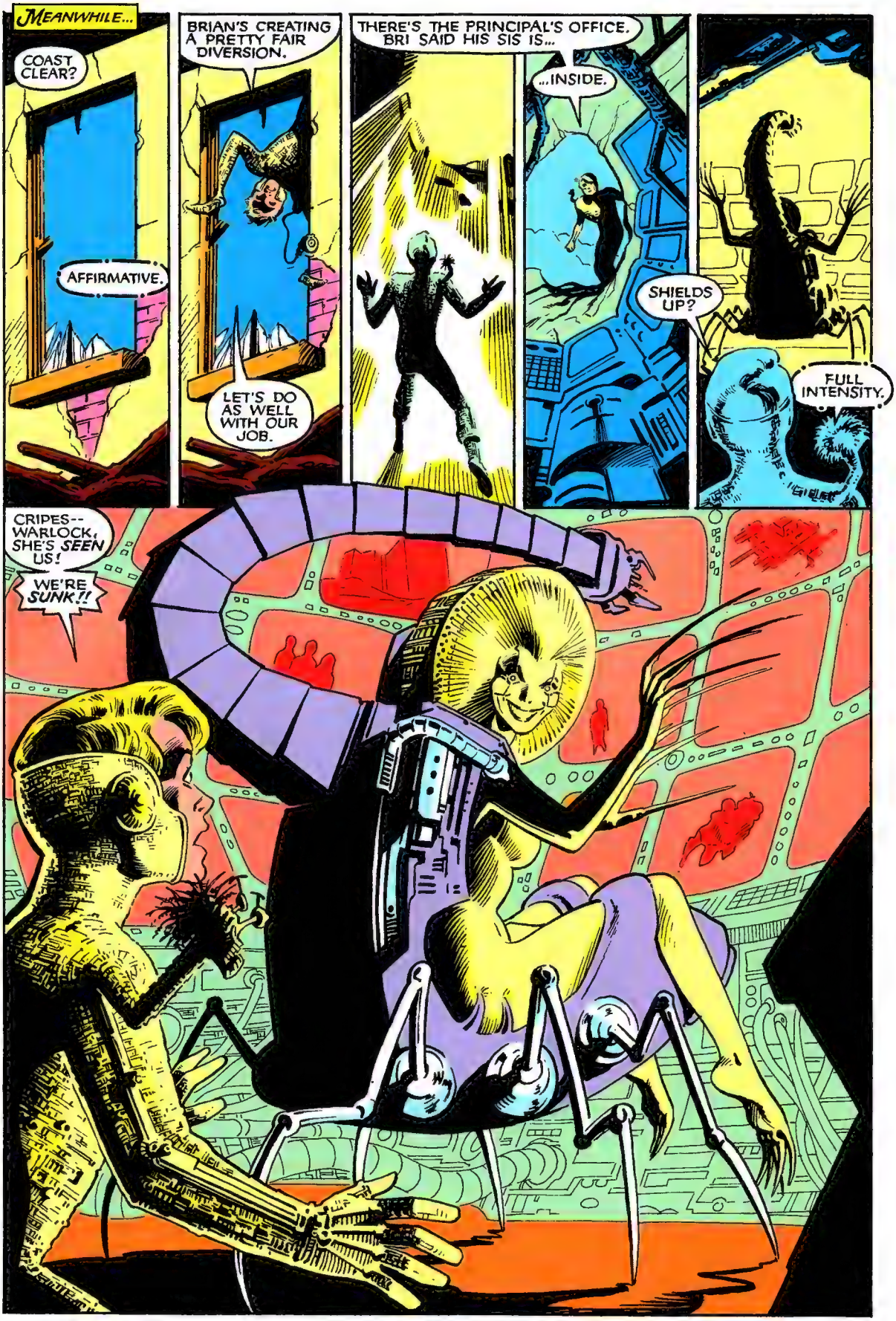

HOLEEE--!?!
THEY'RE SO-- BEAUTIFUL! LIKE MICHELANGELO STATUES COME TO LIFE. BUT, STILL...
WE SCREW UP, 'LOCK-- THEY GET AHOLD OF US-- WE'LL END UP THE SAME WAY.
THIS IS WAY OUT OF OUR LEAGUE, PARTNER. WE NEED OUR SENIOR TEAM, THE X-MEN!
WARNING! INTRUDER CONTACT!
SAY WHAT--?!
SCANNERS REGISTER YOUTHFUL MALE PARAHUMAN ATOP NEIGHBORING STRUCTURE, IMBUED WITH CONSIDERABLE PHYSICAL POWER-- NEAR STELLAR LIFEGLOW-- AND EXTRUDING MOISTURE FROM OCULAR SENSORS...
HE'S CRYING?
DEDUCTION CONFIRMED.
MEMORY CORES INDICATE THIS PHENOMENON IS INDICATIVE OF SEVERE PHYSIOLOGICAL OR EMOTIONAL DISTRESS.
CONTACT ESTABLISHED.
HE'S A KID, YOUNGER'N ME!
SCARED STIFF, TOO-- HE'S CLUTCHING THAT HELMET LIKE HIS LIFE DEPENDED ON IT.
NO SIGNS OF CUTS OR BRUISES, I DON'T THINK HE'S HURT.
HIYA, FELLA. I'M...
GET AWAY!
THWAM!
LEAVE ME ALONE!!
'LOCK-- STOP HIM! BRING HIM BACK!
SELFRIEND INJURED!
PUNK PACKS A WICKED PUNCH...
...BUT I'LL SURVIVE.
I HOPE.

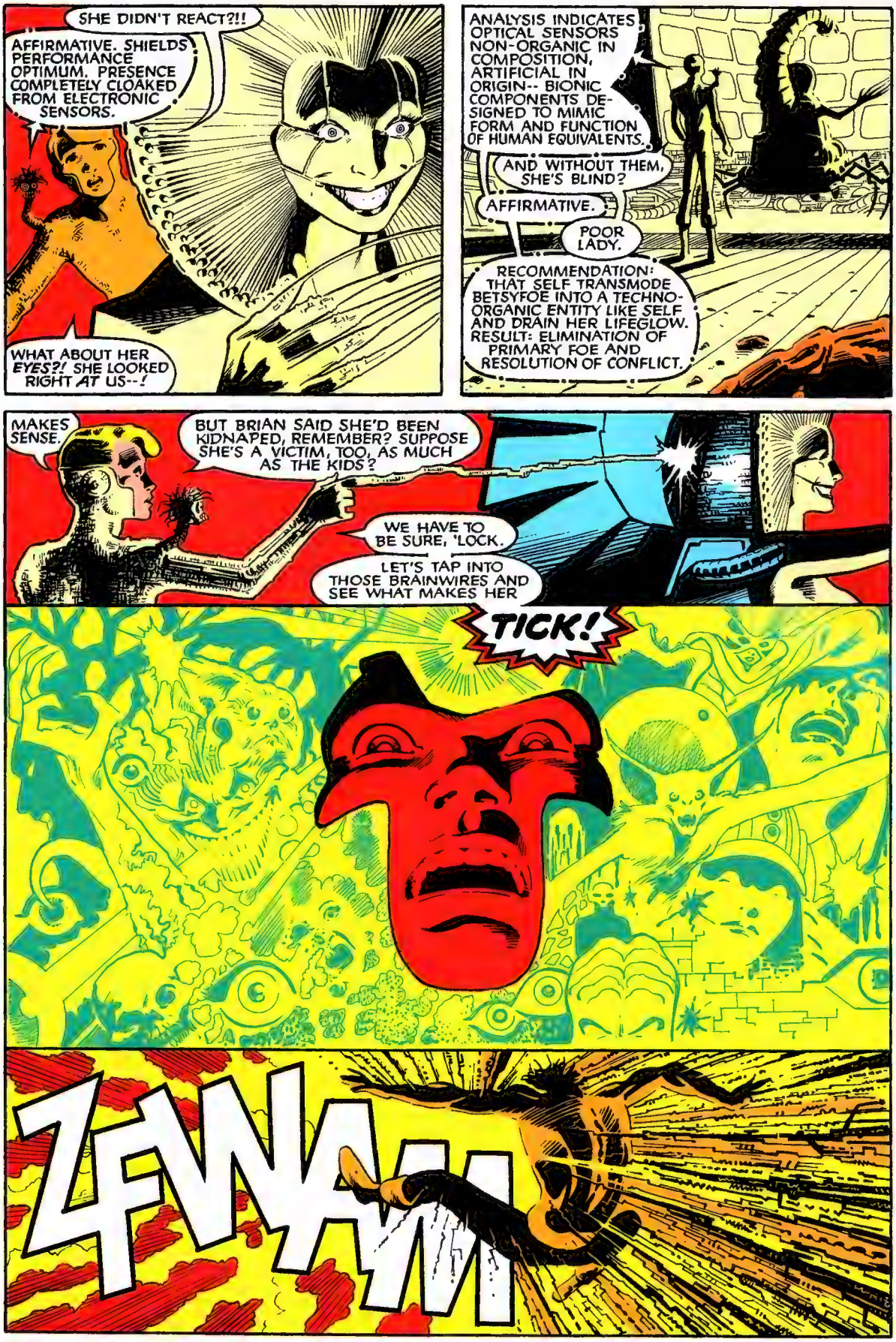

LATER...
MEDISCAN PERCEIVES MAJOR SUBCUTANEOUS TRAUMA...
I CAN SEE AND FEEL THAT FOR MYSELF, 'LOCK-- A HECKUVA BRUISE.
I'M LUCKY YOU DIDN'T BREAK SOME BONES, FELLA.
I'M SORRY. I WAS FRIGHTENED.
WELCOME TO THE CLUB.
MAN O MAN, THIS HURTS! EVERY BREATH-- EVERY HEART-BEAT-- FEELS LIKE I'M BEING POKED WITH A KNIFE.
GOT A NAME?
BRIAN...
...I'M BRIAN BRADDOCK.
I USED TO BE BIGGER-- LOTS BIGGER'N YOU-- BUT THEN MUMMY AND DADDY YELLED AT ME. THEY SAID I WAS A NAUGHTY BOY-- BUT I'M NOT! I'M NOT!
THEY PUNISHED ME ANYWAY. THEY MADE ME LITTLE.
SO I RAN AWAY.
SO HE WAS AN ADULT THEN-- AND JUDGING FROM HIS ABILITIES AND THAT HELMET-- HE WAS A SUPER-BEING, TOO.
HE ISN'T A MUTANT, THOUGH-- OTHERWISE, HE'D HAVE LOST HIS POWERS WHEN HE PASSED BACK THROUGH PUBERTY. SOUNDS ENGLISH. WHAT BROUGHT HIM TO NEW YORK-- AND INTO THIS MESS?
DON'T WORRY, BRIAN, EVERYTHING'LL BE FINE ONCE WE CONTACT THE X-MEN...
NO! THERE ISN'T TIME! THE WILDWAY IS IN ANOTHER DIMENSION, AND THE BRATPACK IS GOING THERE TONIGHT! IF YOU DON'T ACT NOW...
... IT'LL BE TOO LATE! WE'LL NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN!
WHAT THE HECK MAKES YOU THINK I CAN DO ANY GOOD?
WHAT THE HECK MAKES ME THINK I HAVE ANY CHOICE?!
PARDON ME FOR ASKING, FELLA-- BUT YOU SEEM TO KNOW AN AWFUL LOT ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON.
YOU HOLDING OUT? THERE SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T TOLD US?!
YES.
THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE --IT'S MY SISTER, BETSY.
I CAME HERE TO RESCUE HER, TO SAVE HER FROM THE AWFUL VILLAINS WHO'D ABDUCTED HER MONTHS AGO-- ONLY TO DISCOVER SHE'D BECOME ONE OF THEM!
SELFRIENDCYPHER!
COMMOTION BELOW!
IT'S MAGMA!


AMY-BABY, WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?!
THIS IS A LIE!
THIS IS NOT ME!
I AM NO ONE'S SLAVE!!
YOU CANNOT DEFY US, AMARA.
BE THANKFUL, DEVILS--
-- I DO NOT DESTROY YOU!!
IT'S THE YOUNG NOVA ROMANI'S GIFT TO WIELD THE PRIMAL ELEMENTS OF MOTHER EARTH HERSELF-- VOLCANIC FIRE AND MOLTEN ROCK--
--A BYPRODUCT IS THE ABILITY TO GENERATE EARTHQUAKES.
BUT THOUGH AMARA WINS FREE OF TEMPLATE'S CONTROL, HER VICTORY IS A PYRRHIC ONE--
--FOR SHE IMMEDIATELY REVERTS TO THE LITTLE GIRL THEY'D ORIGINALLY REGRESSED HER TO, AND THEREBY, ONCE MORE, LOSES HER MUTANT POWERS.

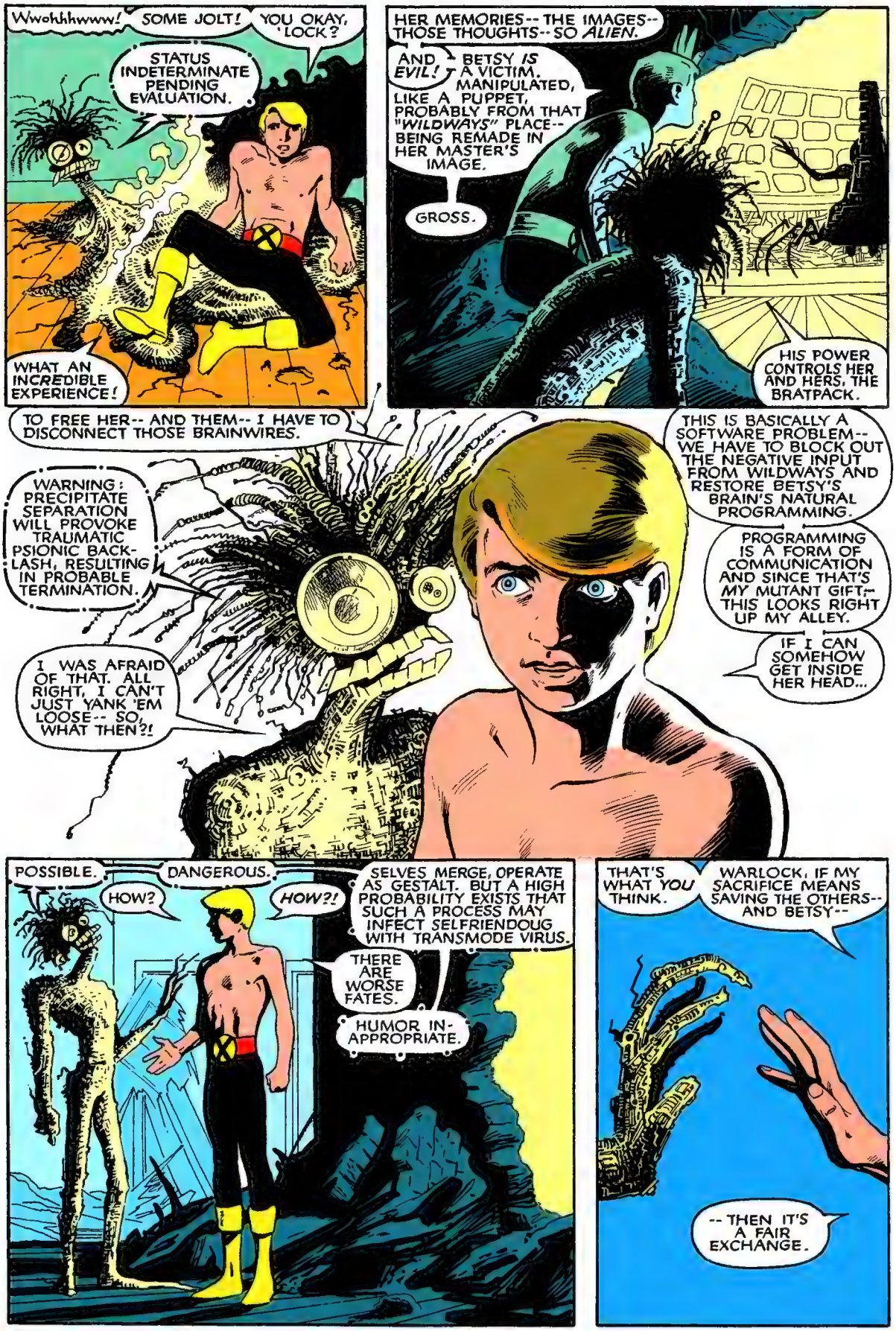

ILLYANA, MIRAGE-- ALL OF YOU-- LOOK AT ME, LISTEN TO ME!
REACH INTO YOUR SOULS-- REMEMBER WHO YOU WERE-- IF YOU FIGHT, YOU CAN BE FREE--
--DON'T LET THESE MONSTERS MAKE YOU SLAVES!
BUT, MAGMA--
--IT'S WHAT WE WANT.
NOT I. I'D RATHER DIE!
THAT MAY YET BE ARRANGED.
IN THE MEAN-WHILE...
...BRATPACK, FOLLOW HER!
BRING HER BACK--
-- AND QUICKLY!
TIME GROWS SHORT!
SHE HASN'T A PRAYER...
... UNLESS SHE GETS SOME HELP!
YOU'RE ELECTED, BRIAN.
YOU LOOK AFTER AMY, WHILE 'LOCK AND I TACKLE YOUR SISTER.
BUT-- SUPPOSE I FAIL AGAIN? THEY'LL CATCH ME--?!
WHAT, YOU CAN'T BE BRAVE-- YOU CAN'T BE A HERO-- 'CAUSE YOU'RE A KID?! BULL! YOU HEARD AMARA-- REMEMBER WHO YOU WERE! IF YOU ABANDON HER, YOU WON'T NEED TEMPLATE TO MAKE YOU PART OF THE BRAT-PACK-- BECAUSE WHERE IT COUNTS, YOU'RE ALREADY ONE OF THEM!
YOUR CHOICE, PAL--
--WHICH'LL IT BE?!

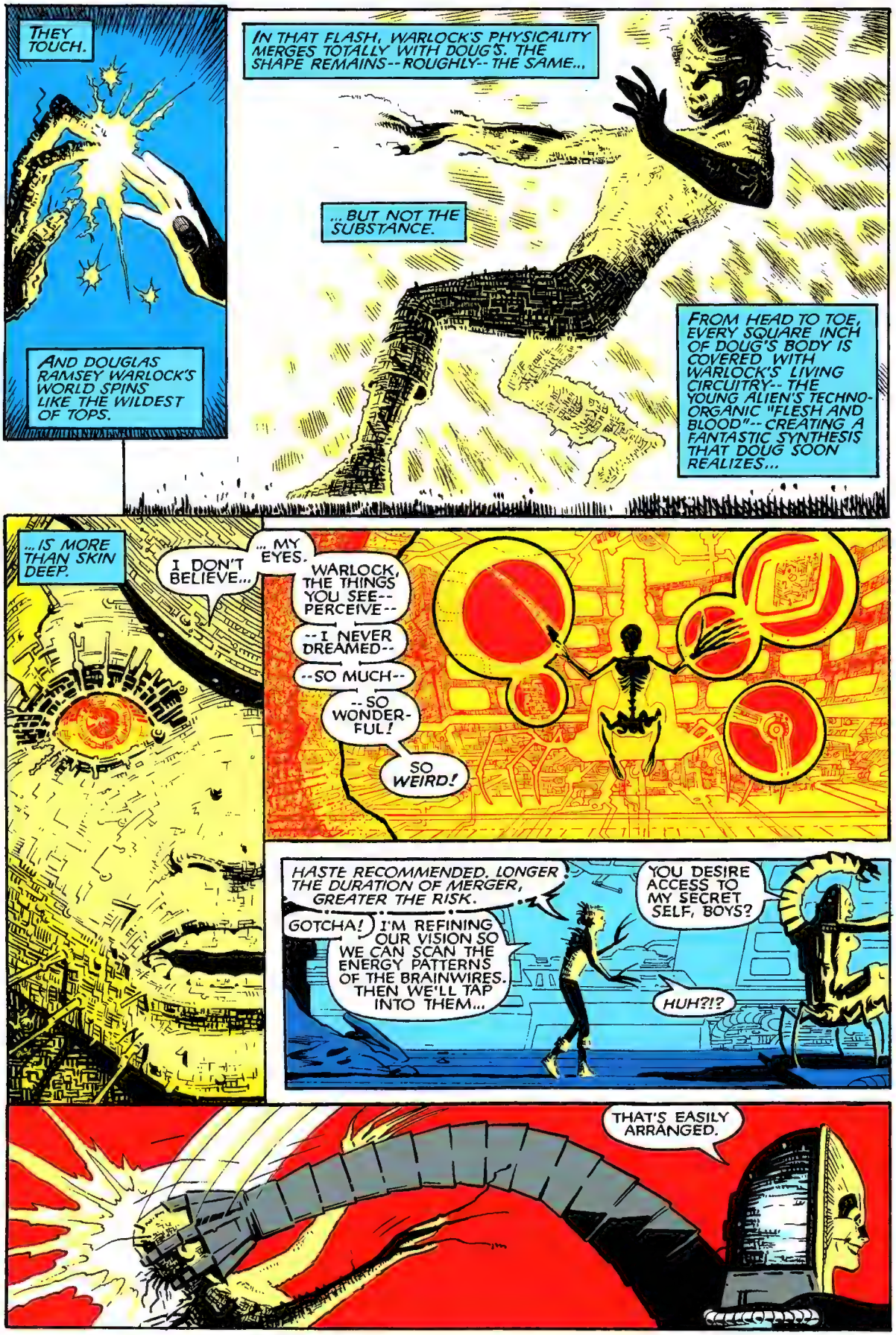
MY COSTUME DIDN'T SHRINK WITH ME--
-- I KEEP TRIPPING OVER MY BOOTS.
WHERE'S THE BRATPACK?! WHICH WAY SHOULD I RUN?!!
OH!
OH!?!
PLEASE...
... I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU. DON'T MAKE ME.
I'M STRAIGHT-ARROW.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE SCARED.
A GLORIOUS DESTINY AWAITS YOU ON THE WILDWAY.
I WANT NO PART OF IT!
YOU WILL. TEMPLATE SAYS YOU MUST.
AND FOLKS KNOW BEST.
THE DEVIL THEY DO!!
WHOP!
?!?
DRAT! I MEANT TO KNOCK THEM ALL DOWN, LIKE NINEPINS.
I'M NOT AS STRONG AS I WAS--
--NOR CAN I FLY AS FAST, OR AS FAR!
WHO ARE YOU?!
CAN'T YOU GUESS?
A KNIGHT IN BORROWED ARMOR--
--FIGHTING WITH BORROWED COURAGE.


MEANWHILE...
COAST CLEAR?
AFFIRMATIVE.
BRIAN'S CREATING A PRETTY FAIR DIVERSION.
LET'S DO AS WELL WITH OUR JOB.
THERE'S THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. BRI SAID HIS SIS IS...
...INSIDE.
SHIELDS UP?
FULL INTENSITY.
CRIPES-- WARLOCK, SHE'S SEEN US!
WE'RE SUNK!!

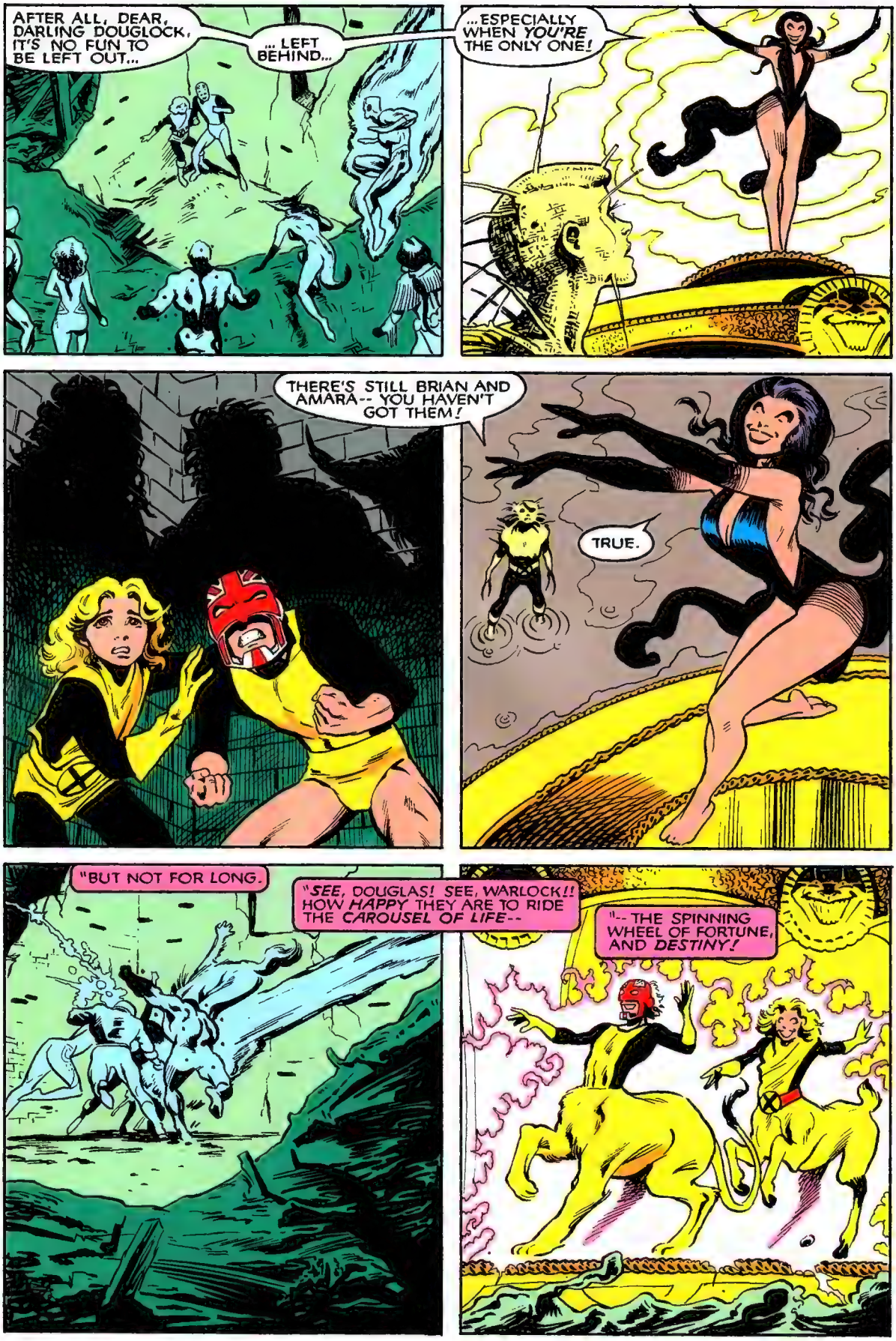

SHE DIDN'T REACT?!!
AFFIRMATIVE. SHIELDS PERFORMANCE OPTIMUM. PRESENCE COMPLETELY CLOAKED FROM ELECTRONIC SENSORS.
WHAT ABOUT HER EYES?! SHE LOOKED RIGHT AT US--!
ANALYSIS INDICATES OPTICAL SENSORS NON-ORGANIC IN COMPOSITION, ARTIFICIAL IN ORIGIN-- BIONIC COMPONENTS DESIGNED TO MIMIC FORM AND FUNCTION OF HUMAN EQUIVALENTS.
AND WITHOUT THEM, SHE'S BLIND?
AFFIRMATIVE.
POOR LADY.
RECOMMENDATION: THAT SELF TRANSMODE BETSYFOE INTO A TECHNO-ORGANIC ENTITY LIKE SELF AND DRAIN HER LIFEGLOW. RESULT: ELIMINATION OF PRIMARY FOE AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT.
MAKES SENSE.
BUT BRIAN SAID SHE'D BEEN KIDNAPED, REMEMBER? SUPPOSE SHE'S A VICTIM, TOO, AS MUCH AS THE KIDS?
WE HAVE TO BE SURE, 'LOCK.
LET'S TAP INTO THOSE BRAINWIRES AND SEE WHAT MAKES HER
TICK!
ZEWAM!

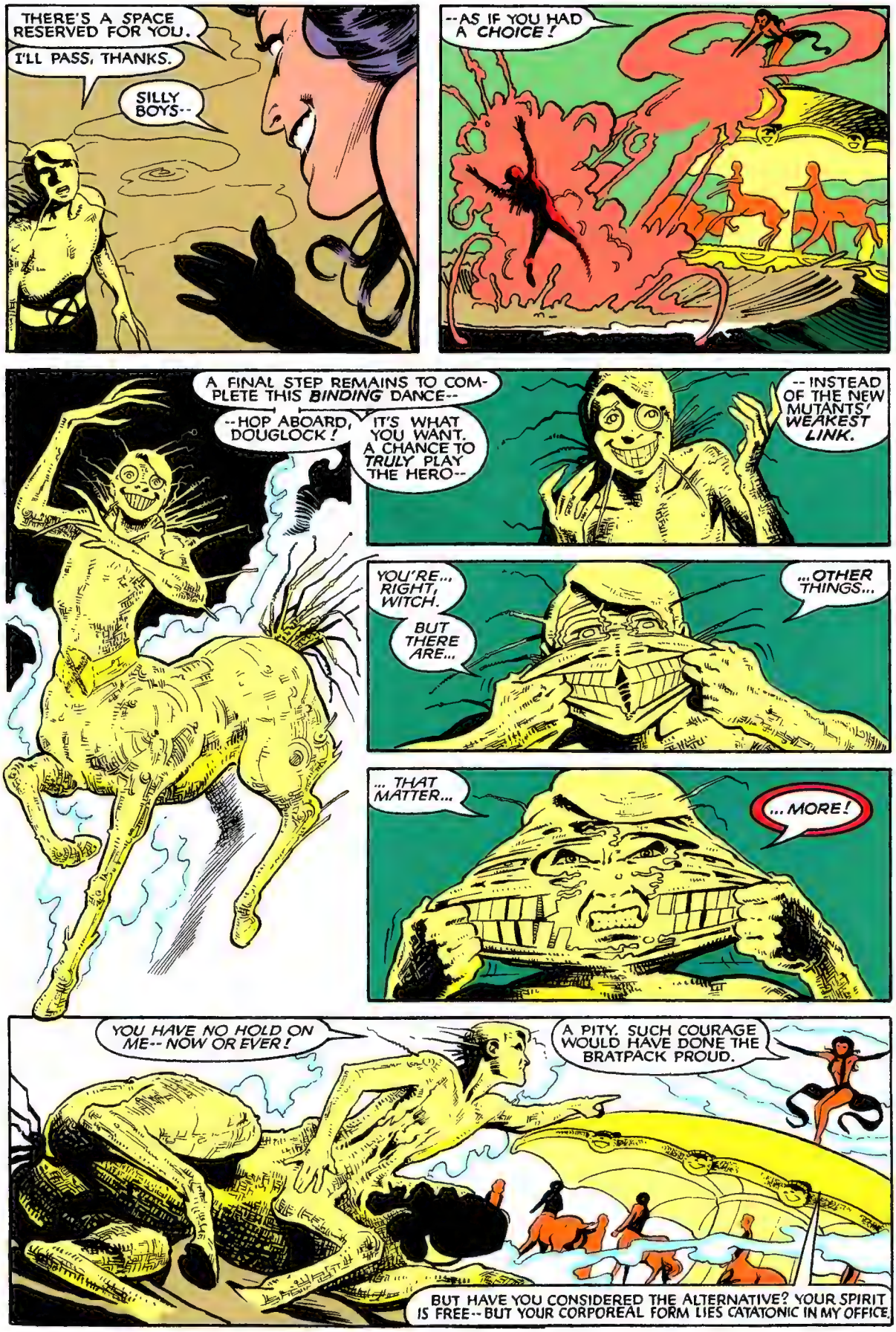
MEANWHILE...
I'M SORRY, AMARA. I CAN'T FLY YOU OVER THESE BUILDINGS OR AROUND THEM, I HAVEN'T THE STRENGTH.
WE'LL HAVE TO TRY ON FOOT.
NO SIGN OF THE BRATPACK. PERHAPS WE'VE GIVEN THEM THE SLIP?
THERE--ONCE WE REACH THAT STREET...
...WE SHOULD BE SAFE ENOUGH IN THE...
...CROWD.
THIS WAY--QUICKLY!
BUT BRIAN, WHEN RAHNE'S IN WOLF FORM, SHE CAN FOLLOW OUR SCENT ANYWHERE!
YOU'D RATHER GIVE UP, THEN?
NO!
EVEN IF OUR OWN ESCAPE IS HOPELESS...
...WE HAVE TO BUY YOUR FRIENDS, DOUGLAS AND WARLOCK...
...AS MUCH TIME AS WE CAN.
BETSY'S THE KEY. DEAL WITH HER...
...AND THE BATTLE'S TRULY WON!
YOU HOPE.
HAVE WE A CHOICE?


Wwohhhwww!
SOME JOLT!
YOU OKAY, 'LOCK?
STATUS INDETERMINATE PENDING EVALUATION.
WHAT AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE!
HER MEMORIES-- THE IMAGES-- THOSE THOUGHTS-- SO ALIEN.
AND EVIL! BETSY IS A VICTIM. MANIPULATED, LIKE A PUPPET, PROBABLY FROM THAT "WILDWAYS" PLACE-- BEING REMADE IN HER MASTER'S IMAGE.
GROSS.
HIS POWER CONTROLS HER AND HERS, THE BRATPACK.
TO FREE HER-- AND THEM-- I HAVE TO DISCONNECT THOSE BRAINWIRES.
WARNING: PRECIPITATE SEPARATION WILL PROVOKE TRAUMATIC PSIONIC BACK-LASH, RESULTING IN PROBABLE TERMINATION.
I WAS AFRAID OF THAT. ALL RIGHT, I CAN'T JUST YANK 'EM LOOSE-- SO, WHAT THEN?!
THIS IS BASICALLY A SOFTWARE PROBLEM-- WE HAVE TO BLOCK OUT THE NEGATIVE INPUT FROM WILDWAYS AND RESTORE BETSY'S BRAIN'S NATURAL PROGRAMMING.
PROGRAMMING IS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION AND SINCE THAT'S MY MUTANT GIFT-- THIS LOOKS RIGHT UP MY ALLEY.
IF I CAN SOMEHOW GET INSIDE HER HEAD...
POSSIBLE.
DANGEROUS.
HOW?
HOW?!
SELVES MERGE, OPERATE AS GESTALT. BUT A HIGH PROBABILITY EXISTS THAT SUCH A PROCESS MAY INFECT SELFRIENDOUG WITH TRANSMODE VIRUS.
THERE ARE WORSE FATES.
HUMOR IN-APPROPRIATE.
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK.
WARLOCK, IF MY SACRIFICE MEANS SAVING THE OTHERS-- AND BETSY--
-- THEN IT'S A FAIR EXCHANGE.

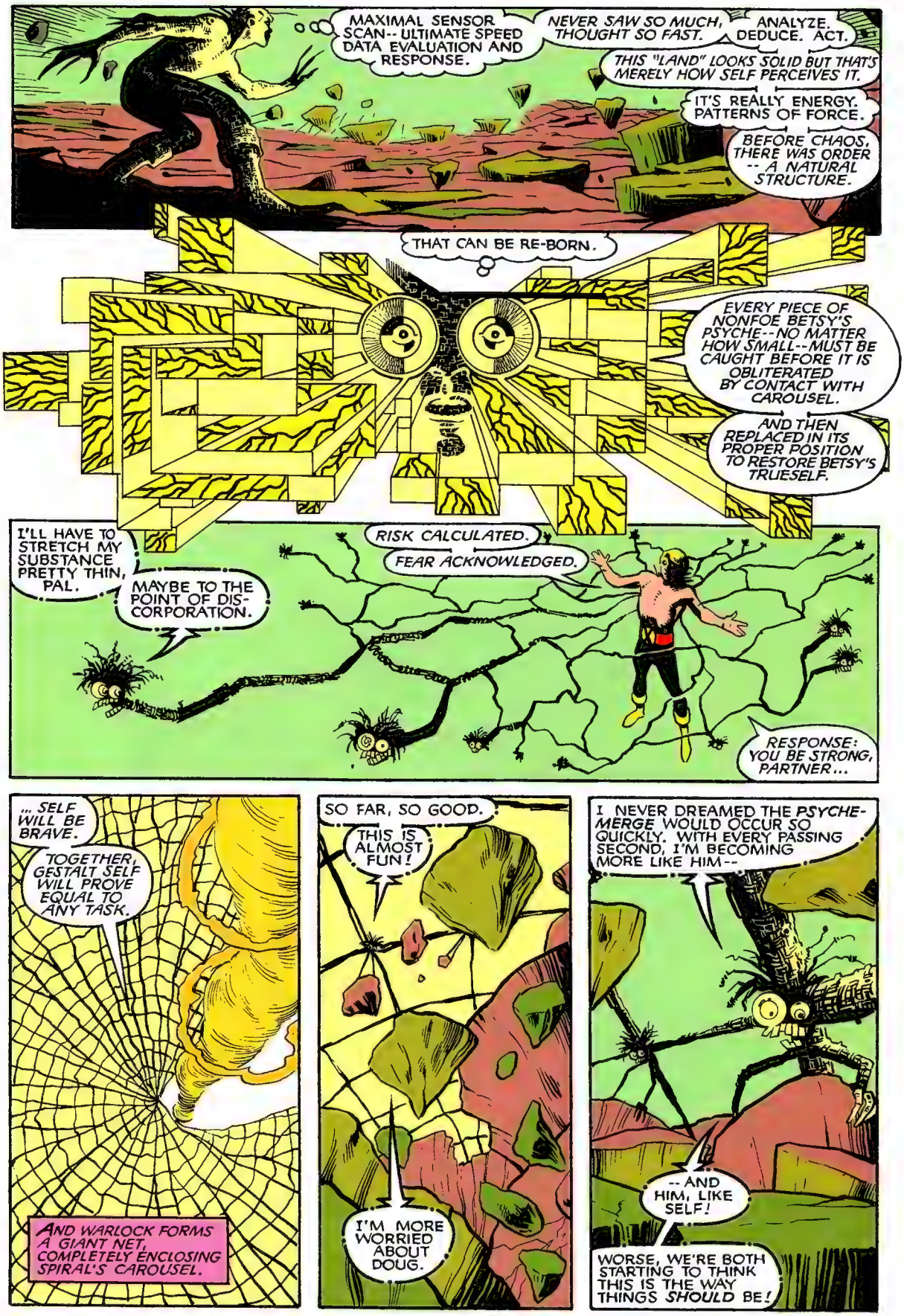

THEY TOUCH.
AND DOUGLAS RAMSEY WARLOCK'S WORLD SPINS LIKE THE WILDEST OF TOPS.
IN THAT FLASH, WARLOCK'S PHYSICALITY MERGES TOTALLY WITH DOUG'S. THE SHAPE REMAINS--ROUGHLY--THE SAME...
...BUT NOT THE SUBSTANCE.
FROM HEAD TO TOE, EVERY SQUARE INCH OF DOUG'S BODY IS COVERED WITH WARLOCK'S LIVING CIRCUITRY--THE YOUNG ALIEN'S TECHNO-ORGANIC "FLESH AND BLOOD"--CREATING A FANTASTIC SYNTHESIS THAT DOUG SOON REALIZES...
...IS MORE THAN SKIN DEEP.
I DON'T BELIEVE...
...MY EYES.
WARLOCK, THE THINGS YOU SEE--PERCEIVE--
--I NEVER DREAMED--
--SO MUCH--
--SO WONDER-FUL!
SO WEIRD!
HASTE RECOMMENDED. LONGER THE DURATION OF MERGER, GREATER THE RISK.
GOTCHA! I'M REFINING OUR VISION SO WE CAN SCAN THE ENERGY PATTERNS OF THE BRAINWIRES. THEN WE'LL TAP INTO THEM...
YOU DESIRE ACCESS TO MY SECRET SELF, BOYS?
HUH?!?
THAT'S EASILY ARRANGED.

ANOTHER FLASH.
ANOTHER WHIRLING, TWISTING SPINNING RIDE THROUGH A MAELSTROM...
...SPIRALING SIDEWAYS FROM OBLIVION...
...TO SOMEWHERE WORSE.
IS THIS REAL?
AM I, ANYMORE?!
SELF DIAGNOSTICS PROGRAM INITIATED--INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SCANS INCONCLUSIVE--DATA CONTRADICTORY--WHOA!
SELF--I--I AM EXPRESSING MYSELF LIKE WARLOCK!
BUT HOW ELSE SHOULD SELF SPEAK?
Oh, GREAT--THIS IS GOING TO BE HARDER...
...THAN SELF THOUGHT.
SALUTATIONS, DEAR BOYS.
AREN'T YOU GLAD? YOUR WISH HAS BEEN GRANTED!
YOU'RE WITHIN BEAUTEOUS BETSY'S BRAIN, A HEARTBEAT FROM HER SOUL!
AND ALL YOUR FRIENDS ARE HERE TO WELCOME YOU.
THEY'RE HAVING A *WONDERFUL* TIME. THEY SIMPLY *ADORE* THEIR LORD AND MASTER, FOR HE GIVES THEM PURPOSE--AND BRINGS THEM *LIFE!*
HE--AND THEY--CAN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO *JOIN* THEM!
WILDWAYS

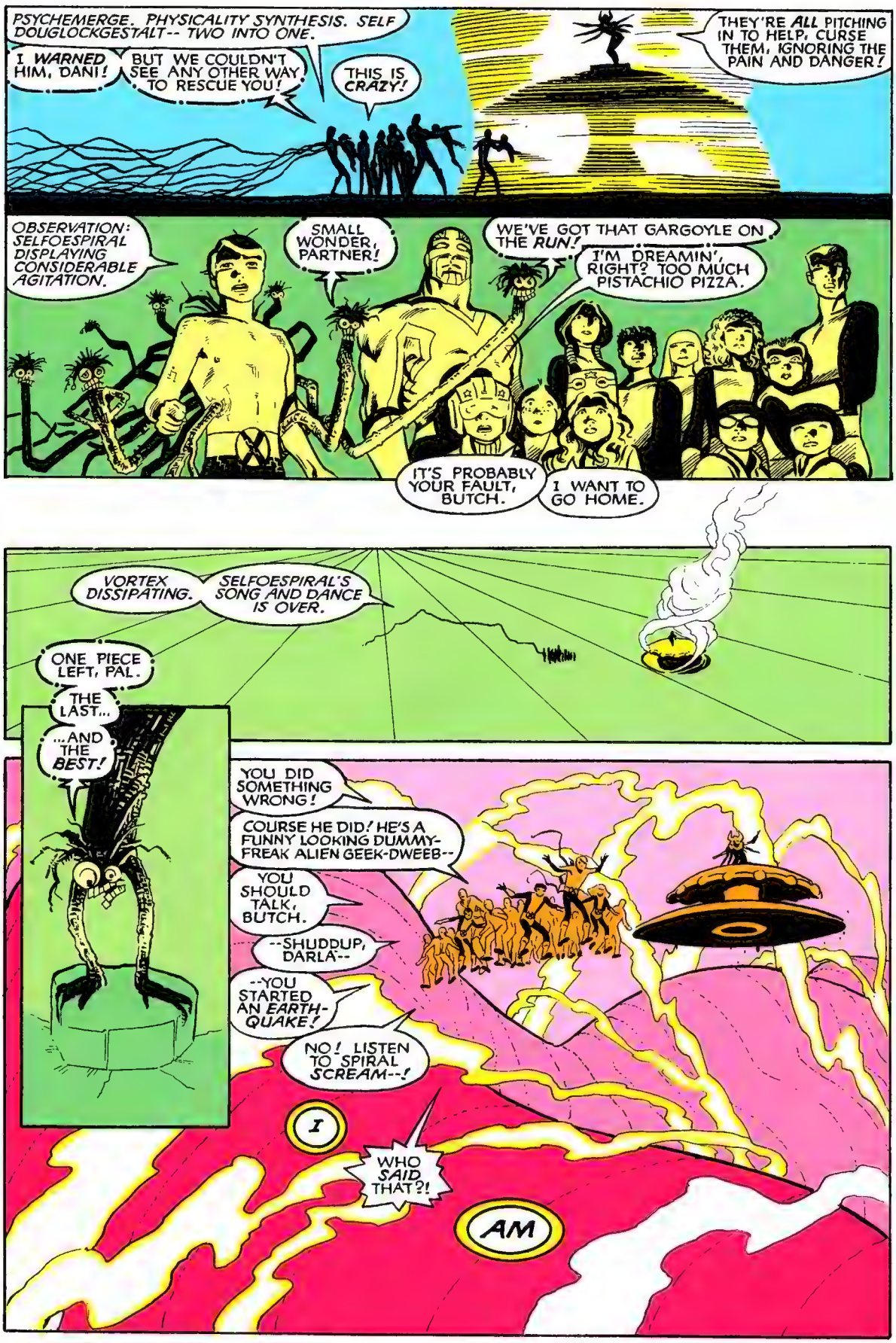

AFTER ALL, DEAR, DARLING DOUGLOCK, IT'S NO FUN TO BE LEFT OUT...
... LEFT BEHIND...
...ESPECIALLY WHEN *YOU'RE* THE ONLY ONE!
THERE'S STILL BRIAN AND AMARA-- YOU HAVEN'T GOT THEM!
TRUE.
"BUT NOT FOR LONG.
"*SEE*, DOUGLAS! SEE, WARLOCK!! HOW *HAPPY* THEY ARE TO RIDE THE *CAROUSEL OF LIFE*--
"-- THE SPINNING WHEEL OF FORTUNE, AND *DESTINY*!

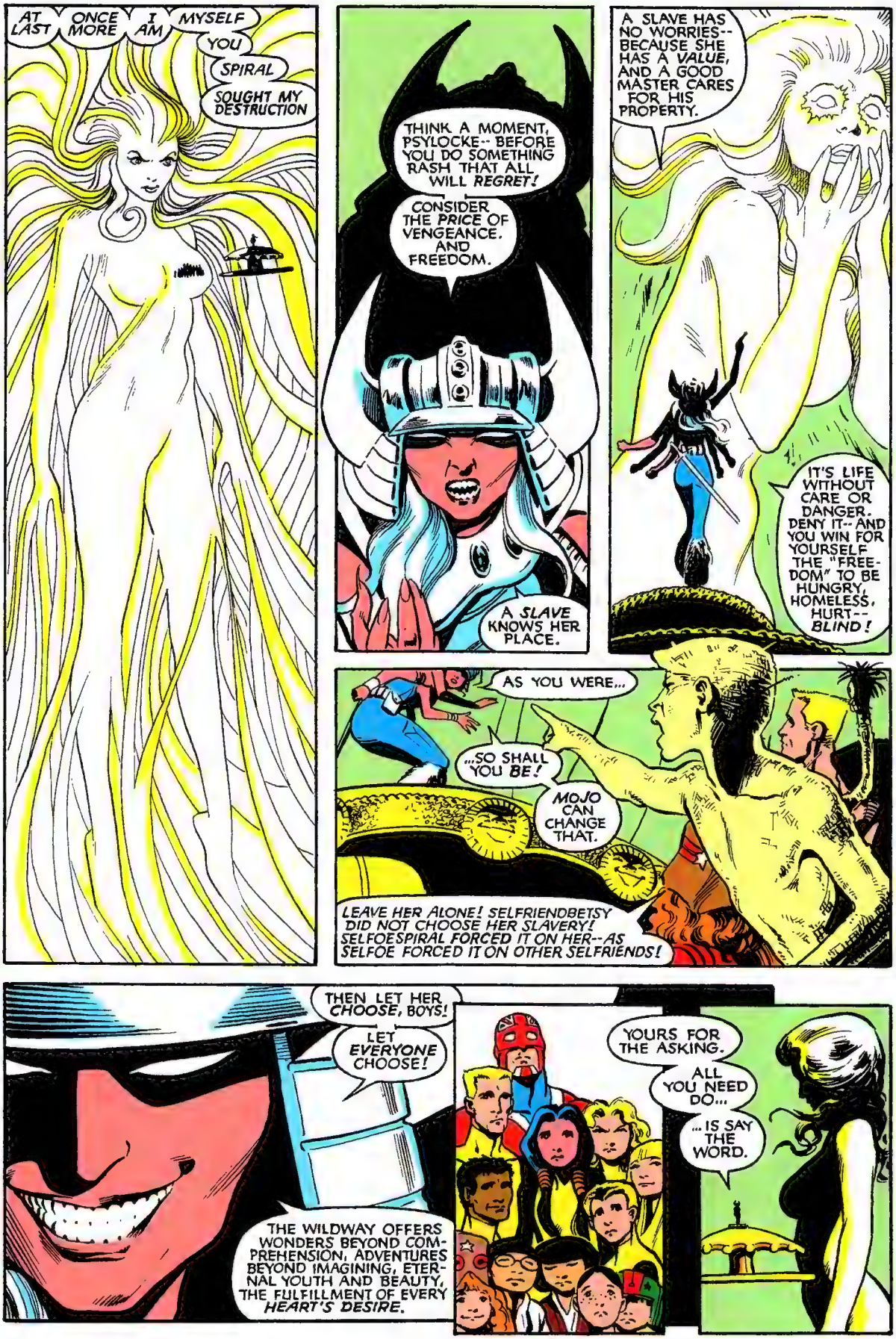

THERE'S A SPACE RESERVED FOR YOU.
I'LL PASS, THANKS.
SILLY BOYS--
--AS IF YOU HAD A CHOICE!
A FINAL STEP REMAINS TO COMPLETE THIS BINDING DANCE--
--HOP ABOARD, DOUGLOCK!
IT'S WHAT YOU WANT. A CHANCE TO TRULY PLAY THE HERO--
-- INSTEAD OF THE NEW MUTANTS' WEAKEST LINK.
YOU'RE... RIGHT, WITCH.
BUT THERE ARE...
...OTHER THINGS...
... THAT MATTER...
... MORE!
YOU HAVE NO HOLD ON ME-- NOW OR EVER!
A PITY. SUCH COURAGE WOULD HAVE DONE THE BRATPACK PROUD.
BUT HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE ALTERNATIVE? YOUR SPIRIT IS FREE-- BUT YOUR CORPOREAL FORM LIES CATATONIC IN MY OFFICE.

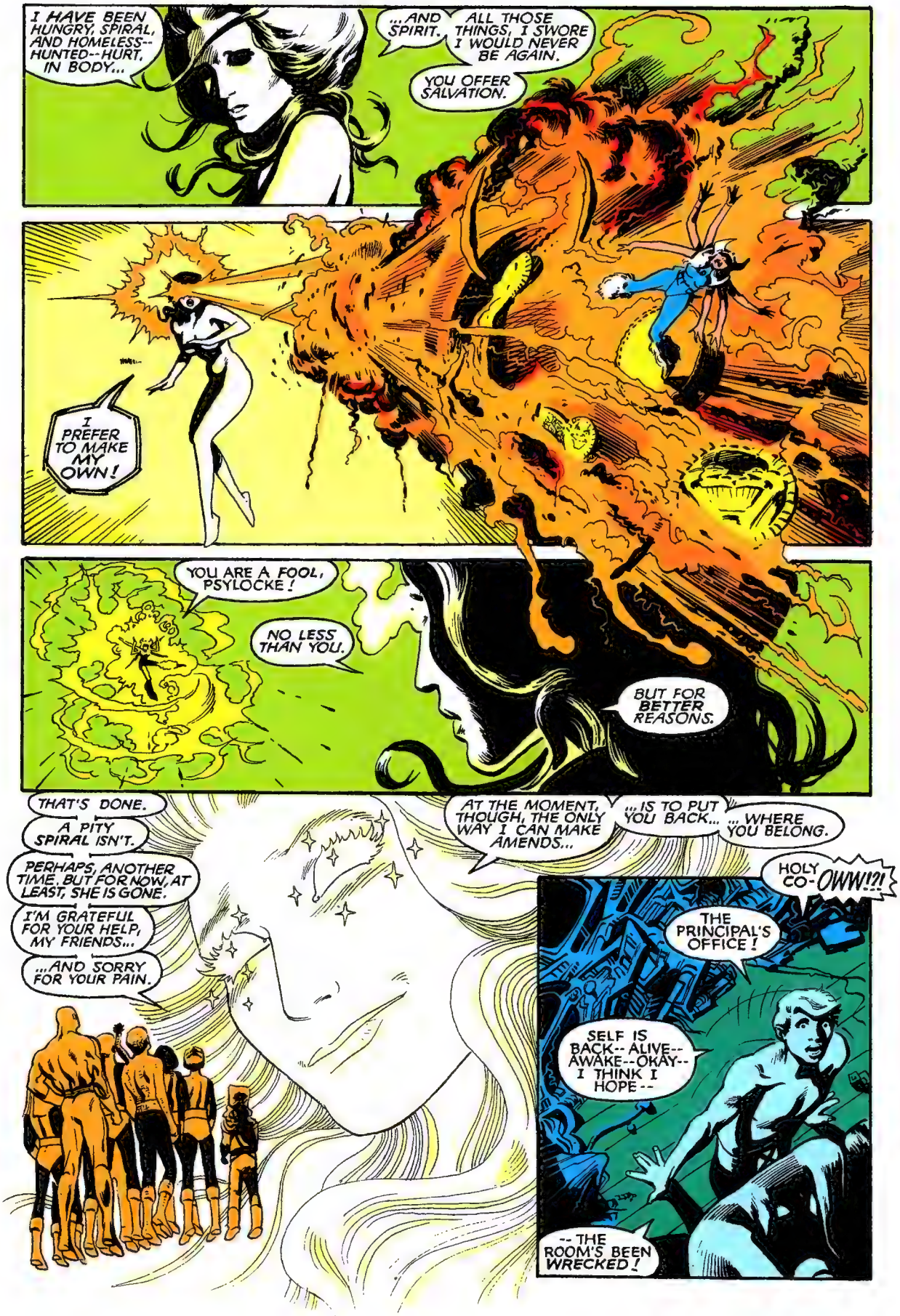
A SIMPLE--HELPLESS--THING FOR THE BRAT-PACK TO SLAY!
NOT IF I GET YOU FIRST!
A TOUCH IS ALL IT TAKES. THE TRANSMODE VIRUS IS INCURABLE, ITS EFFECTS IRREVERSABLE!
IF YOU'RE A MANIFESTATION OF MISS BRADDOCK--
--YOU'RE DONE FOR!
BUT I AM NOT.
SNAP
SCREAM
AN INSPIRED PLOY, DOUGLOCK.
SUCH A SHAME IT WAS WASTED ON SPIRAL.
ABOUT YOU LIES BETSY'S CONSCIOUSNESS--HELD IN THRALL BY MOJO AS HER PSYLOCKE'S POWER ENSLAVES THE BRATPACK.
NOW, BEHOLD, AS I DANCE IT-- AND YOU -- TO GLORY!
EVERY FACET OF THE PSYLOCKE'S BEING SHALL BE TORN FROM ITS ROOTS BY MY CHAOS WALTZ.
THE MOMENT THOSE PIECES TOUCH MY VORTEX, THEY'LL BE DESTROYED! AND BECAUSE THEY'RE PSYCHICALLY LINKED WITH HER, THE BRAT-PACK WILL SHARE HER FATE!
MY LOVELY LUNATIC LIFE-BRINGER, MOJO, SOUGHT TO MAKE THEM STARS. HE'S ABOUT TO LEARN THAT'S FAR EASIER SAID THAN DONE--ESPECIALLY WITH PETS WHO ARE NAUGHT BUT HOLLOW, MINDLESS SHELLS. LIVING INCURABLY DEAD.
MOJO ROTS FLESH--SPIRAL ROTS THOUGHT, AND SELF, AND SPIRIT!
HE CREATED THE WILDWAYS--BUT IT IS ONLY SPIRAL'S RIGHTFUL PLACE TO DANCE UPON IT!

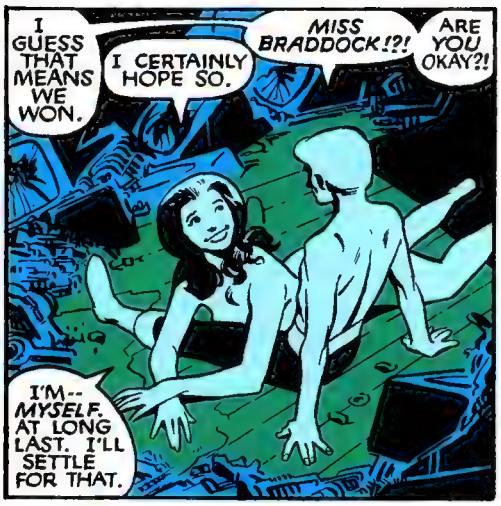

MAXIMAL SENSOR SCAN-- ULTIMATE SPEED DATA EVALUATION AND RESPONSE.
NEVER SAW SO MUCH, THOUGHT SO FAST.
ANALYZE. DEDUCE. ACT.
THIS "LAND" LOOKS SOLID BUT THAT'S MERELY HOW SELF PERCEIVES IT.
IT'S REALLY ENERGY. PATTERNS OF FORCE.
BEFORE CHAOS, THERE WAS ORDER -- A NATURAL STRUCTURE.
THAT CAN BE RE-BORN.
EVERY PIECE OF NONFOE BETSY'S PSYCHE--NO MATTER HOW SMALL--MUST BE CAUGHT BEFORE IT IS OBLITERATED BY CONTACT WITH CAROUSEL.
AND THEN REPLACED IN ITS PROPER POSITION TO RESTORE BETSY'S TRUESELF.
I'LL HAVE TO STRETCH MY SUBSTANCE PRETTY THIN, PAL.
MAYBE TO THE POINT OF DIS-CORPORATION.
RISK CALCULATED.
FEAR ACKNOWLEDGED.
RESPONSE: YOU BE STRONG, PARTNER...
... SELF WILL BE BRAVE.
TOGETHER, GESTALT SELF WILL PROVE EQUAL TO ANY TASK.
AND WARLOCK FORMS A GIANT NET, COMPLETELY ENCLOSING SPIRAL'S CAROUSEL.
SO FAR, SO GOOD.
THIS IS ALMOST FUN!
I'M MORE WORRIED ABOUT DOUG.
I NEVER DREAMED THE PSYCHE-MERGE WOULD OCCUR SO QUICKLY. WITH EVERY PASSING SECOND, I'M BECOMING MORE LIKE HIM--
-- AND HIM, LIKE SELF!
WORSE, WE'RE BOTH STARTING TO THINK THIS IS THE WAY THINGS SHOULD BE!

SELFSOULFRIENDWARLOCK'S PERFORMANCE WITHIN OPTIMUM OPERATIONAL PARAMETERS.
SELF MUST NOW INITIATE PHASE TWO.
SELFRIENDS-- REACH OUT! BREAK MUTANTFOESPIRAL'S MINDCHAINS-- STRIKE OUT FOR FREEDOM--
--TAKE SELF'S HAND!
CAROUSEL'S VELOCITY EXTREME.
POSSIBLY BEYOND SELF'S CAPACITY TO WITHSTAND.
DENIAL ! IN PSYCHIC ENVIRONMENT...
... STRENGTH IS A FUNCTION OF WILL--
ALARM ALARM ALARM
STRESS THRESHOLD EXCEEDED, SELF COHESION THREATENED--
--AND...
... DETERMINATION!
QUERY?!!
EXTREMITY WAS A CHILD'S. NOW IT IS AN ADULT'S?!
MAGNIFICENT, LAD! YOU DID IT!
IDENTITY UNKNOWN.
VOCAL PATTERNS-- AND HELMET-- INDICATE THAT SELF PERCEIVES TRUE FORM OF SELFRIEND BRIAN BRADDOCK.
LUCK ROT THEIR BONES!
I'M TRAPPED! ALL MY ENERGIES ARE DEVOTED TO DANCING MY VORTEX. DIVERT EVEN THE SMALLEST IOTA TO STOP DOUGLOCK AND THE PSYLOCKE MAY WIN FREE HERSELF.
MY ONLY RECOURSE IS TO COMPLETE HER OBLITERATION BEFORE THEY FINISH-- AND THEN LET HER DEAL WITH THEM.
HERE COME TWO MORE, DOUGLAS!
YYYOWW!
SELF HAS YOU, CHIEFSELFRIEND DANIMIRAGE!
SAFE AND SOUND.
FOR THE PRESENT.
DOUG?! BUT YOUR VOICE-- WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE WARLOCK?!!


PSYCHEMERGE. PHYSICALITY SYNTHESIS. SELF DOUGLOCKGESTALT-- TWO INTO ONE.
I WARNED HIM, DANI!
BUT WE COULDN'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY TO RESCUE YOU!
THIS IS CRAZY!
THEY'RE ALL PITCHING IN TO HELP, CURSE THEM, IGNORING THE PAIN AND DANGER!
OBSERVATION: SELFOESPIRAL DISPLAYING CONSIDERABLE AGITATION.
SMALL WONDER, PARTNER!
WE'VE GOT THAT GARGOYLE ON THE RUN!
I'M DREAMIN', RIGHT? TOO MUCH PISTACHIO PIZZA.
IT'S PROBABLY YOUR FAULT, BUTCH.
I WANT TO GO HOME.
VORTEX DISSIPATING.
SELFOESPIRAL'S SONG AND DANCE IS OVER.
ONE PIECE LEFT, PAL.
THE LAST...
...AND THE BEST!
YOU DID SOMETHING WRONG!
COURSE HE DID! HE'S A FUNNY LOOKING DUMMY-FREAK ALIEN GEEK-DWEEB--
YOU SHOULD TALK, BUTCH.
--SHUDDUP, DARLA--
--YOU STARTED AN EARTH-QUAKE!
NO! LISTEN TO SPIRAL SCREAM--!
I
WHO SAID THAT?!
AM


AT LAST
ONCE MORE
I AM
MYSELF
YOU
SPIRAL
SOUGHT MY DESTRUCTION
THINK A MOMENT, PSYLOCKE-- BEFORE YOU DO SOMETHING RASH THAT ALL WILL REGRET!
CONSIDER THE PRICE OF VENGEANCE. AND FREEDOM.
A SLAVE KNOWS HER PLACE.
A SLAVE HAS NO WORRIES-- BECAUSE SHE HAS A VALUE, AND A GOOD MASTER CARES FOR HIS PROPERTY.
IT'S LIFE WITHOUT CARE OR DANGER. DENY IT-- AND YOU WIN FOR YOURSELF THE "FREEDOM" TO BE HUNGRY, HOMELESS, HURT-- BLIND!
AS YOU WERE...
...SO SHALL YOU BE!
MOJO CAN CHANGE THAT.
LEAVE HER ALONE! SELFRIENDBETSY DID NOT CHOOSE HER SLAVERY! SELFOESPIRAL FORCED IT ON HER--AS SELFOE FORCED IT ON OTHER SELFRIENDS!
THEN LET HER CHOOSE, BOYS!
LET EVERYONE CHOOSE!
THE WILDWAY OFFERS WONDERS BEYOND COMPREHENSION, ADVENTURES BEYOND IMAGINING, ETERNAL YOUTH AND BEAUTY, THE FULFILLMENT OF EVERY HEART'S DESIRE.
YOURS FOR THE ASKING.
ALL YOU NEED DO...
...IS SAY THE WORD.


I HAVE BEEN HUNGRY, SPIRAL, AND HOMELESS--HUNTED--HURT, IN BODY...
...AND SPIRIT.
ALL THOSE THINGS, I SWORE I WOULD NEVER BE AGAIN.
YOU OFFER SALVATION.
I PREFER TO MAKE MY OWN!
YOU ARE A FOOL, PSYLOCKE!
NO LESS THAN YOU.
BUT FOR BETTER REASONS.
THAT'S DONE.
A PITY SPIRAL ISN'T.
PERHAPS, ANOTHER TIME. BUT FOR NOW, AT LEAST, SHE IS GONE.
I'M GRATEFUL FOR YOUR HELP, MY FRIENDS...
...AND SORRY FOR YOUR PAIN.
AT THE MOMENT, THOUGH, THE ONLY WAY I CAN MAKE AMENDS...
...IS TO PUT YOU BACK...
...WHERE YOU BELONG.
HOLY CO-OWW!?!
THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE!
SELF IS BACK--ALIVE--AWAKE--OKAY--I THINK I HOPE--
-- THE ROOM'S BEEN WRECKED!


I GUESS THAT MEANS WE WON.
I CERTAINLY HOPE SO.
MISS BRADDOCK!?!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
I'M-- MYSELF. AT LONG LAST. I'LL SETTLE FOR THAT.

BUT AFTER ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR ME, DOUGLAS, THERE SHOULD BE NO FORMALITIES BETWEEN US.
I'M BETSY.
HOW STRANGE-- AND DULL-- AND... SAD-- OUR WORLD LOOKS COMPARED TO THE WILDWAY. I ALMOST MISS IT-- GASP?!!
I'M LOOKING-- REALLY LOOKING--

-- MY EYES--
-- I CAN SEE!
WARLOCK TOLD ME THEY WERE BIONIC. ARTIFICIAL.
A GIFT FROM LORD MOJO...

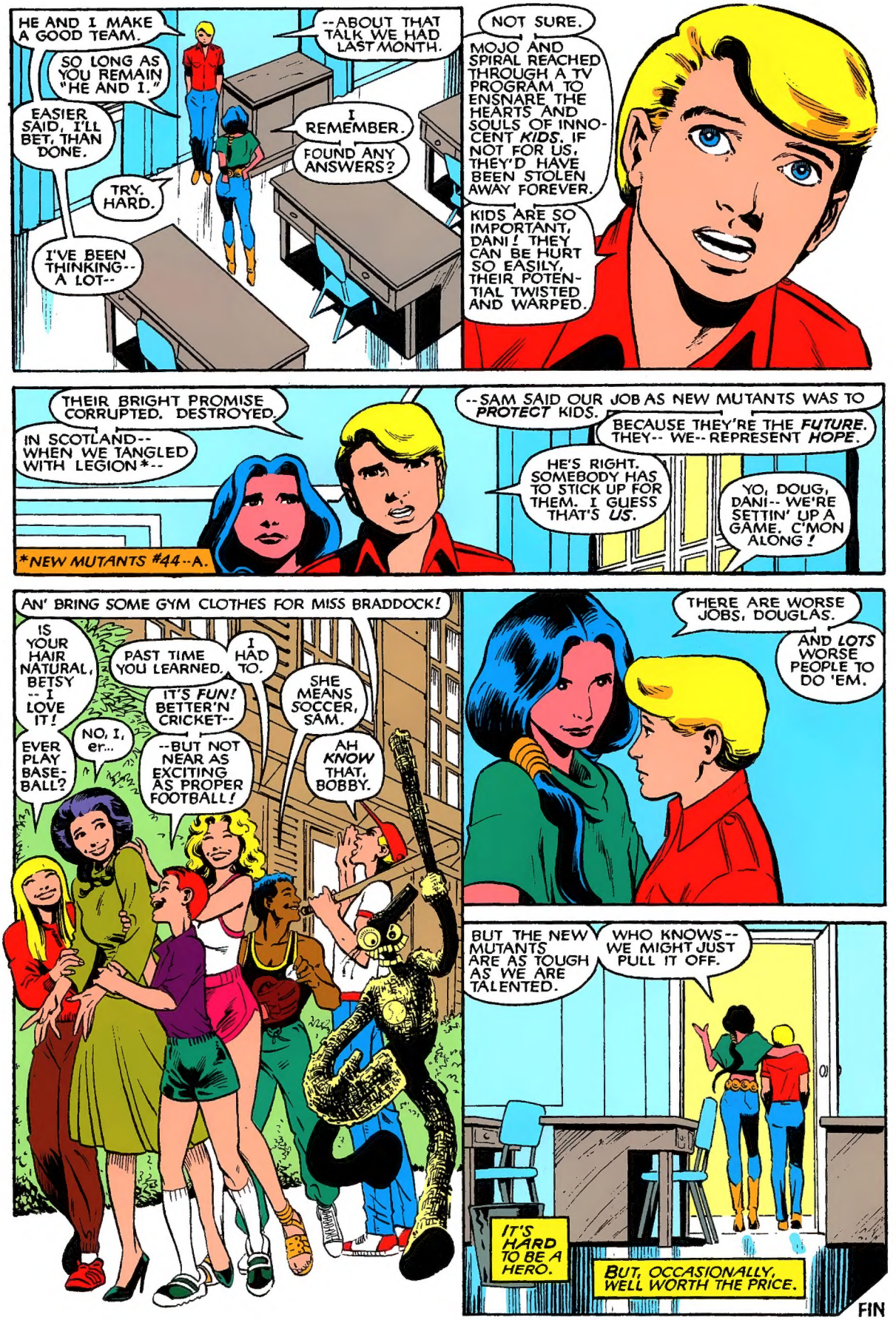
...TO HIS FAVORITE SLAVE.
EVERYTHING ELSE HAS BEEN DESTROYED.
WHY LEAVE THEM INTACT?
MOJO AND SPIRAL HAVE THEIR REASONS. PROBABLY AS CRUEL AND TWISTED AS THEIR SOULS. I AM BETTER OFF WITHOUT THEM.
BUT-- YOU'LL BE BLIND AGAIN!
THANK YOU FOR CARING. BUT A TELEPATH CAN NEVER BE TRULY BLIND. I'LL "SEE" AS I DID BEFORE, THROUGH THE MINDS AND EYES OF OTHERS.

DOUG...
... oh, MY DEAR FRIEND...
... I MUST DO THIS...

... BUT I CAN'T!

FOUND 'EM!
DANI!
AND THE WHOLE GANG, KIDDO...
...HALE AND HEARTY!
ANY SIGNS OF WARLOCK, HE'S THE ONLY ONE STILL MISSING?
WARLOCK! I FORGOT ALL ABOUT HIM!!
AMONG OTHER THINGS, LOOKS LIKE.
YOU SLY, SNEAKY DEVIL, YOU.
Huh?!?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING...
...ABOUT?!!?
OHMIGOSH!?!?!
Oh, DEAR!
THE OTHERS -- WHAT'LL WE DO--?!!
POSSESS NEGATIVE APPREHENSION, SELFRIENDS. SELF IS HERE, READY TO SAVE THE DAY!
WARLOCK! GREAT!!
WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?!
PRESENT. RESTORING PHYSICAL COHESION. EXECUTING DIAGNOSTICS PROGRAM TO DETERMINE SELFSTATUS.
SYSTEMS NOMINAL.
Ahem!
HOW, er...
...THOUGHTFUL, WARLOCK.
JUST REMEMBER YOUR MANNERS, PARTNER--
--OR ELSE!
BETSY!
BRIAN!
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT! I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU!
AND HERE'S THE LAD TO WHOM WE OWE EVERY-THING--
-- WHO'S PROVEN HIMSELF, BEYOND ALL DOUBT, THE NOBLEST OF FRIENDS...
...AND HEROES!!

LATER, AT THE X-MEN'S MANSION-- AFTER THE "BORROWED" CHILDREN HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO THEIR RIGHTFUL HOMES...
YOU'RE DETERMINED TO STAY?
I'VE BEEN A VICTIM TOO OFTEN, BRIAN.
TOO MANY HAVE SUFFERED BECAUSE OF MY SHORT-COMINGS.
HERE, AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL, I CAN LEARN HOW TO BETTER USE MY PSI-TALENT-- TO PROTECT MYSELF, AND HELP OTHERS.
I UNDER-STAND.
IF YOU EVER NEED ME--
--EVEN IF IT'S SIMPLY TO TALK--
--YOU'LL HEAR, I PROMISE.
HE SENSES SOMETHING'S AMISS, BUT ISN'T SURE HOW TO ASK. PERHAPS SOME-DAY I'LL REVEAL THE TRUTH ABOUT MY EYES.
FOR NOW, THOUGH, I'D PREFER IT TO REMAIN...
...DOUGLAS' AND WARLOCK'S AND MY SECRET.
TAKE CARE, BRIAN! MY LOVE TO MEGGAN!
OLD LIFE OVER.
NEW ONE'S ABOUT TO BEGIN.
I'M AFRAID.
DOUGLAS IS WATCHING.
MY "GUARDIAN ANGEL."
HOW MUCH HE CARES--
--MORE THAN HE REALIZES.
HOW MUCH I CARE...
... IN RETURN.
CRIPES, I'M BLUSHING AGAIN!
WHAT BETSY MUST THINK--?! AND SHE CAN READ MY MIND! I'M DOOMED!
HOW'S TRICKS, HERO?
DON'T ASK.
IT'S PART OF MY JOB, BUDDY, LOOKING OUT FOR THE TEAM.
WELL, YOU CAN RELAX. THERE DON'T SEEM TO BE ANY AFTER-EFFECTS FROM MY GESTALT MELD WITH WARLOCK. MEDISCAN SHOWS NO TRACE OF THE TRANSMODE VIRUS IN MY SYSTEM. I GUESS I'M CLEAN.
THANK HEAVEN FOR SMALL FAVORS. AFTER THIS, DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK.


HE AND I MAKE A GOOD TEAM.
SO LONG AS YOU REMAIN "HE AND I."
EASIER SAID, I'LL BET, THAN DONE.
TRY. HARD.
I'VE BEEN THINKING-- A LOT--
--ABOUT THAT TALK WE HAD LAST MONTH.
I REMEMBER.
FOUND ANY ANSWERS?
NOT SURE.
MOJO AND SPIRAL REACHED THROUGH A TV PROGRAM TO ENSNARE THE HEARTS AND SOULS OF INNOCENT KIDS. IF NOT FOR US, THEY'D HAVE BEEN STOLEN AWAY FOREVER.
KIDS ARE SO IMPORTANT, DANI! THEY CAN BE HURT SO EASILY, THEIR POTENTIAL TWISTED AND WARPED.
THEIR BRIGHT PROMISE CORRUPTED. DESTROYED.
IN SCOTLAND-- WHEN WE TANGLED WITH LEGION*--
*NEW MUTANTS #44--A.
--SAM SAID OUR JOB AS NEW MUTANTS WAS TO PROTECT KIDS.
BECAUSE THEY'RE THE FUTURE. THEY-- WE-- REPRESENT HOPE.
HE'S RIGHT. SOMEBODY HAS TO STICK UP FOR THEM. I GUESS THAT'S US.
YO, DOUG, DANI-- WE'RE SETTIN' UP A GAME. C'MON ALONG!
AN' BRING SOME GYM CLOTHES FOR MISS BRADDOCK!
IS YOUR HAIR NATURAL, BETSY -- I LOVE IT!
EVER PLAY BASEBALL?
NO, I, er...
PAST TIME YOU LEARNED.
I HAD TO.
IT'S FUN! BETTER'N CRICKET--
--BUT NOT NEAR AS EXCITING AS PROPER FOOTBALL!
SHE MEANS SOCCER, SAM.
AH KNOW THAT, BOBBY.
THERE ARE WORSE JOBS, DOUGLAS.
AND LOTS WORSE PEOPLE TO DO 'EM.
BUT THE NEW MUTANTS ARE AS TOUGH AS WE ARE TALENTED.
WHO KNOWS-- WE MIGHT JUST PULL IT OFF.
IT'S HARD TO BE A HERO.
BUT, OCCASIONALLY, WELL WORTH THE PRICE.
FIN

BRACH'S

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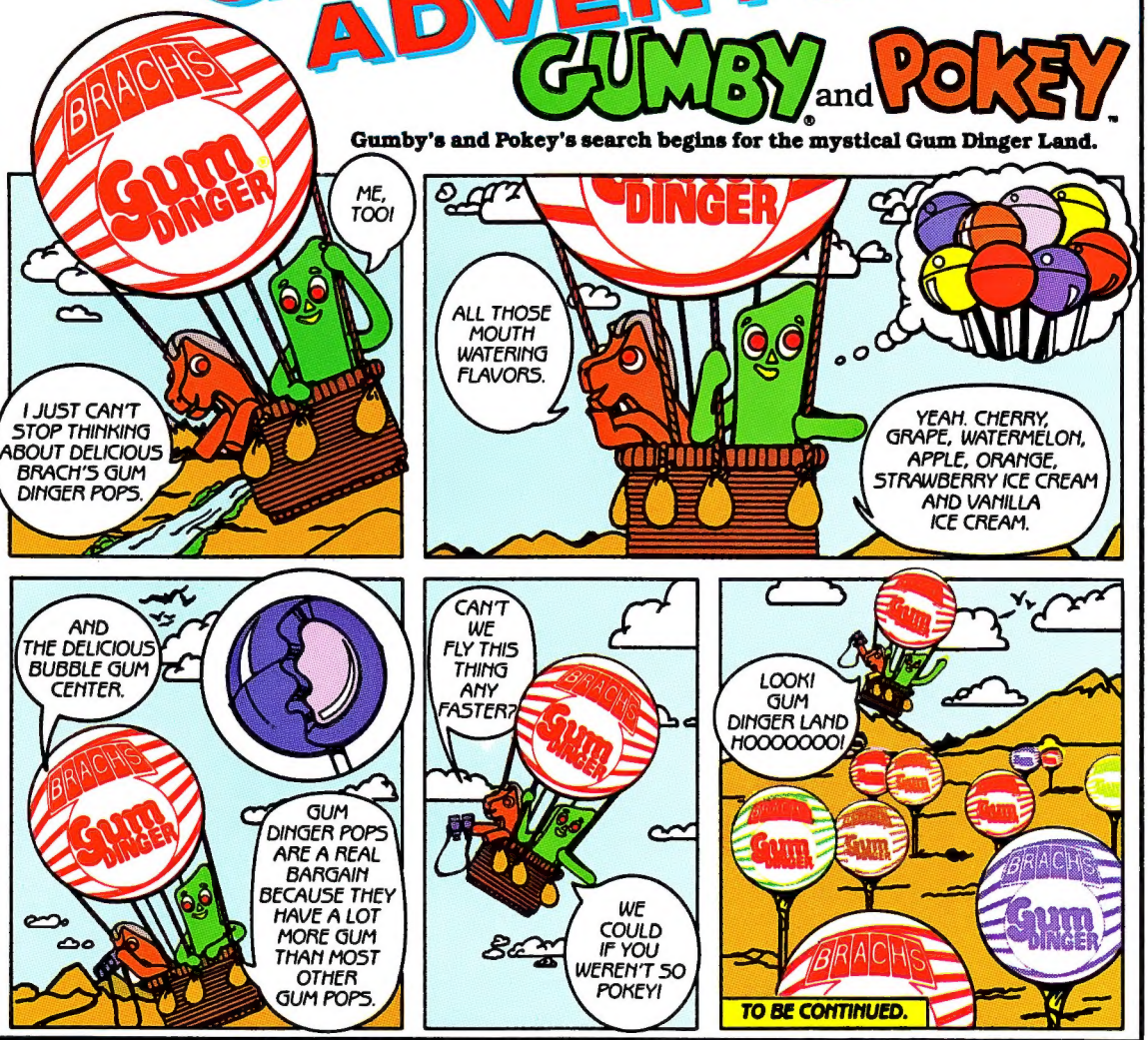
GUMBY® and POKEY™

Gumby's and Pokey's search begins for the mystical Gum Dinger Land.


BRACH'S
Gum DINGER
ME, TOO!
I JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT DELICIOUS BRACH'S GUM DINGER POPS.
DINGER
ALL THOSE MOUTH WATERING FLAVORS.
YEAH. CHERRY, GRAPE, WATERMELON, APPLE, ORANGE, STRAWBERRY ICE CREAM AND VANILLA ICE CREAM.
AND THE DELICIOUS BUBBLE GUM CENTER.
GUM DINGER POPS ARE A REAL BARGAIN BECAUSE THEY HAVE A LOT MORE GUM THAN MOST OTHER GUM POPS.
CAN'T WE FLY THIS THING ANY FASTER?
WE COULD IF YOU WEREN'T SO POKEY!
LOOK! GUM DINGER LAND HOOOOOOO!
TO BE CONTINUED.

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